

**Collective Memories and Social Struggle in Contemporary Bolivia: A Study of Narratives of
the Past during the 'Gas War' in La Paz (2003) and the Civic Strike in Potosí (2010)**

By

Sue Angélica Serra Iamamoto

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School of Politics and International Relations
Queen Mary University of London

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SUE A. S. IAMAMOTO

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on how collective memories appeared during social mobilisation in Bolivia and how they helped social activists to make sense of their struggle and to build a sense of cohesion around it. Two very distinct moments of social struggles are studied: those of September and October 2003 in the province of Omasuyos and the city of El Alto, and that of July and August 2010 in the city of Potosí. The work is based on 70 semi-structured interviews with local activists from the three areas, as well as archival research, particularly from newspapers, and participant observation in public spaces: demonstrations, marches, assemblies, workshops, commemorative ceremonies and local rites.

The thesis is structured in three parts, each dedicated to one of the areas and to one main collective memory. Part I covers the struggle in Omasuyos province during the 'Gas War' and the memory of the anti-colonial rebellion of Tupac Katari (1781). Part II is dedicated to the mobilisation in the city of El Alto in the same period and to the memory of the War of the Pacific (1879) and the lost seacoast. Part III focuses on the civic strike in Potosí in 2010 and on the memory of the rise and fall of the "glorious" colonial Imperial City of Potosí.

Collective memories depicted in this study served as platforms to express the demands of contemporary social struggles, and were particularly powerful because they contained a combination of the following elements. They presented a simplified prototypical story of imbalance, with just and unjust characters (normally identified as the activists and the state), which could be easily projected into familiar spaces and displayed corporal metaphors reproducing the effect of trauma. This narrative has often experienced a path-dependent continuous remembering through history (fed by official nationalism and oppositional movements) and turns out to be both constitutive and instrumental for the activists claiming it. Thus, this work avoids the understanding of collective memories as "latent" or as expressions of "collective unconscious" and makes a contribution to the study of the politics of memory and the mechanisms that explain the strength of storytelling during collective action.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

When the sun finally rose, even I - who could not understand any of the Aymara spoken around me - felt a sort of redemption. Of course, freezing for two hours in the Andean highland contributed a lot to that. It was the morning of 21st June 2013, winter solstice in the Southern Hemisphere, a date commonly known in Bolivia as the Andean New Year. We were gathered around a 10 metre high statue of Tupac Katari,¹ on top of a hill called Q'alachaqa, located less than a half kilometre away from the town of Achacachi. The celebration was organised by Achacachi's municipal government and there were hundreds of people there, most of them authorities from rural communities. Both men and women were dressed with the symbols of the Omasuyos province: red *ponchos*, red *polleras*, and black hats.²

The celebration of the Andean New Year in Q'alachaqa is a new phenomenon. It started some years ago, after the major mobilisations in 2000, 2001 and 2003, when the hill was used as a meeting point for the road blockade happening at its base, precisely where a stone bridge (*q'alachaqa* in Aymara) is located. From the mountain, the protestors could see whether the army was coming to unblock the road, and also had a clear view of what was happening in the town of Achacachi. In 2013, by contrast, people were not looking down, checking whether enemy forces were coming. They were looking at themselves. As the sun rose, the red *ponchos* became increasingly bright, matching the colour of the bonfires that were warming us up. With the first rays of sunlight, people started to greet each other, the sun and the Pachamama. Any outsider would think that this ceremony had been going on forever. Yet, even the statue of Tupac Katari was only a couple of years old.

After the greetings, we went down the hill towards the *pueblo*, marching through the town's main street. Achacachi is home to around 9,000 people and its economic importance is due to the markets on Thursdays and Sundays, which attract people from various communities to buy and sell products. The town's architecture is peculiar. It is difficult to note traces of the

¹ Tupac Katari was the leader of an Indian rebellion that occurred in the late colonial period in the territory that now corresponds to Bolivia. His rebellion and all its symbolic strength in contemporary Bolivia will be an extensive topic of discussion in Chapter Three.

² *Ponchos* are the traditional garments of indigenous men in the Andean region, normally worn during public activities. *Polleras* are the characteristic voluminous skirts worn by indigenous women on a more daily basis. "*Mujer de pollera*" (women in *pollera*) has become a politically correct term to call indigenous women in the press in the recent years. It replaces the term "*cholita*", which literally means a "small *chola*", a more derogatory and patronising term. The clothing in public celebrations and festivities of peasant and indigenous communities is normally more standardised, with men and women wearing the same colours in their *ponchos* and *polleras*. In Omasuyos, particularly, *ponchos rojos* (red *ponchos*) and *polleras rojas* (red *polleras*) are used almost as synonyms of the local peasant leaders. Chapter Two will introduce the province and its activists in detail.

colonial buildings that characterise most of the provincial towns in the Bolivian highlands. They were replaced by colourful buildings, typical of the *arquitectura cohetillo* so fashionable in El Alto,³ and by more sober neo-Andean styles, with *chakanas* (the Andean cross) and stone mosaics used in public buildings (schools or the new bus terminal). As will be explained in Chapter Two, the Aymara peasants of Omasuyos province had enough reasons to erase the more traditional architecture of Achacachi: the old houses were associated with former local elites, who established the *hacienda* regime, subjugating indigenous communities to non-indigenous *patrones* (landowners). In Omasuyos province, elite families would not live inside their estates (*haciendas*) but rather in Achacachi, the provincial capital (Albó, 1979, pp. 32–33). This regime of exploitation ended in 1953, with the Agrarian Reform Decree, which abolished the *haciendas*. A new merchant elite, which included former peasants and craftsmen, took over from the landowning elite in the town (Albó, 1979, pp. 139–141).



Figure 1 – Andean New Year in Achacachi

On the other hand, there were traditions from the past that people in Omasuyos wanted to maintain, such as the ritual I saw that morning in Q'alachaqa. Despite being a new celebration in a place that symbolised a recent story of struggle, the Andean New Year was rooted in local understandings of temporality. Daniel Rojas, a peasant leader in the 1970s, explained his

³ Full of reflecting windows and colours, the *arquitectura cohetillo* is inspired by the “explosive” decoration of ballrooms (*cohetillo* means small firecrackers) (Candela, 2012).

understanding of the date and the ritual: “June 21st is *K’ala Taqaya*, Andean New Year. We say that when the frost is hard. We thought it was a tradition, the sun goes around until there, then comes to this side (...). Slowly, until December 21st”. Nevertheless, he recognised that the ritual began in the context of Evo Morales’ rise to power: “We did not know the history because we had traditional governments, it was difficult. (...) Now there is the process of change [*proceso de cambio*], our brother Evo is in power, so we have to remember, he is from the countryside as well”.⁴

The New Year in Achacachi is a reconstructed memory, related not only to the traditional understanding of the passage of time and seasons, but also to a broader national and political context, which involves the struggle against former governments and Evo Morales’ arrival to power. Andrew Canessa, who has commented on the emergence of the Andean New Year in one community of the highlands of La Paz department, goes further and proposes that these rituals, which clearly “assert a relationship of a people to their past”, also assert a relationship of “a community to the nation” and contribute to a new model indigenous citizenship (Canessa, 2012a, p. 218).

The selective forgetting and remembering of peasant and indigenous people in Achacachi is just one of the examples that can be raised to illustrate the complex relationship between memory and social mobilisation in Bolivia. A point of departure of this study is certainly the fact that Bolivian society has been characterised as both particularly inclined to collective action (or institutional instability, depending on the commentator’s political preferences) and specially attached to the past. The former is often depicted by the continuous struggles undertaken by state miners, indigenous peasants, and urban popular sectors (Dunkerley, 1984; Hylton & Thomson, 2007; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987), sustained by a strong tradition of grassroots organisations, be they described as “collective citizenship” (Wanderley, 2008, p. 223) or “infrastructure of class struggle” (Webber, 2011b, p. 19). The special role the past plays in contemporary Bolivia either appears to explain the endurance of its social movements (Farthing & Kohl, 2013) or, more specifically, to depict the way highland indigenous peasant groups see the past in the present, mirrored in the landscape and in daily and ritual activities (Abercrombie, 1998; Canessa, 2008).

There is a clear relationship between the recovering of the past and the ideological positions of actors. In a previous work on the papers of “views of country” presented during the Constitutional Assembly in 2007, I noted that all left-wing groups included a balance of Bolivian history in their considerations, while the majority of the right-wing parties focused only on the

⁴ Interview, 23 June 2013.

present and the future. They rejected the idea of a “historical debt” of the former political elites with regards to the new institutional actors (Iamamoto, 2013, p. 163). Therefore, in contemporary Bolivia, the politics of memory are not attached to a conservative agenda as could be expected in European countries, for example. Memories appear in moments of collective action, when institutionalised power relations are contested, and amongst popular organisations, such as neighbourhood councils, unions, left-wing civic committees and indigenous peasant communities.

This study covers three different localities - Omasuyos province, the city of El Alto and the city of Potosí - during recent and intense periods of mobilisation: September and October 2003 in the first two, and July and August 2010 in the latter. In 2003, the most important national struggle since Bolivia’s re-democratisation process in the 1980s occurred, an event that unfolded key social and political transformations in the following years. The centre of the mobilisation was the department of La Paz, where the seat of government is located. The mobilisation started in Omasuyos, located northwest of the city of La Paz, on the shores of Lake Titicaca, with a bold and extensive peasant petition. Roads connecting the province with La Paz were completely blocked and communities had organised to sustain the blockades for months and to march towards La Paz, if needs be. They recalled the image of the anti-colonial hero Tupac Katari, who led an indigenous army and besieged La Paz for months in 1781.

When the government violently repressed a road blockade in Warisata, a town 10 kilometres from Achacachi, the province capital, the protest spread to urban areas, mainly El Alto, a city adjacent to La Paz, home to around 800,000 people, many with strong attachments to the highland rural countryside. The main objectives of the collective action then changed to denounce the government’s violence, demanding the resignation of the president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, and to ask for the nationalisation of natural gas, a topic that had been growing in importance over the past months and had gathered the support of the main national organisations. The discussions started with the government’s plan to sell natural gas to the United States through a port in Chile, considered an enemy nation because it took over Bolivia’s former seacoast territory during the War of the Pacific in 1879. Complaining about this deal that would benefit the old adversary, *alteños* demanded a national policy of gas exploitation that brought more advantages for Bolivians: nationalisation followed by the industrialisation of these resources. Completely paralysed by a radical civic strike, El Alto also suffered the violence of the state: almost 60 people were killed by the military, who opened fire against protesters in operations to clear the blockades. After such bloodshed the political support of Sánchez de Lozada crumbled and he resigned on 17 October 2003. The so-called “the Gas War” (*la Guerra del Gas*) or “Black October” (*Octubre Negro*) marked an important turning point in national

politics and when other left-wing initiatives in the following years wanted to affirm the extent of their popular authenticity, they claimed attachment to the “October agenda”.



Map 1 – Studied areas

The city of Potosí experienced a different process in 2010. The political and social processes that started at the beginning of the decade resulted in the election of Evo Morales and in the establishment of a new political hegemony organised around his party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), already consolidated by the end of his first term in 2009.⁵ The department of Potosí and its capital had largely supported the MAS and Morales in all electoral contests until then and the COMCIPO, the civic committee of Potosí, declared itself to be part of the *proceso de cambio* (process of change). By 2010, however, local inhabitants started to demand the promised change and tried to get Morales to compromise on six topics broadly

⁵ For analyses of this new historical bloc, in Gramscian terms, that emerged during the mobilisations between 2000 and 2005 and surrounded the government of Evo Morales and his party, see Cunha Filho (2011) and Iamamoto (2013, pp. 109–142).

related to the department's development. After the government discredited the movement, calling it partisan, the mobilisation intensified. Within a couple of weeks, the main departmental roads and all the entrances to the city of Potosí were blocked; around 2,000 people were on hunger strike. *Potosinos* were convinced that the government had a historical debt with the department, claiming that since colonial times all sorts of rich resources have been extracted from the region and no wealth has ever returned. Based on this claim, the slogan "Federal Potosí" spread among the protestors. The outcome of the 19 days of civic strike, however, was frustrating. Isolated, the civic organisations did not manage to negotiate many concessions with the government.

The three examples studied here show an interaction between social memory and collective action, in which stories about the past gain new life when applied to current situations. They bond the actors and contextualise their struggle into a more coherent narrative of prototypical events that happened in the past, but can be mirrored in present situations. Thus, this research does not investigate the struggles *per se*; explaining the reasons why people mobilise and the main factors determining participation is not a major objective. Other studies of contemporary Bolivia, as will be seen below, have already dedicated their efforts to do that quite effectively. My focus of investigation is precisely the relationship between these struggles and collective memories, how the latter represent a device to root actors in space and time during the former. In doing this, some secondary explanations for the struggles and the narratives will emerge, but the original contribution of this work is to put both together in the contemporary Bolivian context and to explore theoretical and methodological paths that are opened when a combined study of this sort is carried out.

The aim of this chapter is three-fold. First, it presents the literature that has analysed this recent period of mobilisations in Bolivia and the studies that have somehow included temporalities, the past and memories in their characterisations of this society. Second, it sketches a theoretical "pathway" in order to detail how collective memories appear in the present, to explain their strength during social struggles and to identify how this study relates to recent developments in memory studies. Third, it presents the research methodology, explaining how the cases were chosen, how the fieldwork was conducted and issues of generalisability and positionality.

Regarding the recent literature on Bolivia, many authors have used memory to explain contemporary collective action, but advanced little in explaining memories themselves. This strand of scholars was highly influenced by a previous generation, particularly by René Zavaleta Mercado and Silvia Rivera. Their path-breaking works, which are presented subsequently, also have incorporated memories into their interpretation of Bolivian society, but have given little

attention to the mechanisms behind its reproduction. As a consequence, two main problems emerged in their analyses: an almost psychoanalytical approach, in which memory appears to have a life of its own, suddenly awakening from collective unconscious and fostering collective action; and a simplistic understanding of the way past events are interpreted by contemporary actors, as if the most socio-politically important events of the past necessarily become relevant memories in the present. Two further significant contributions are then presented: the experience of the Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA), a group that has played an important role in recovering stories of indigenous rebellions and fostering their memories among communities; and anthropological studies that analysed Andean rural perspectives of memory and history. These contributions provide us with some key insights, such as into the conscious promotion of memory and the constitutive way memory pervades daily lives in Andean communities, that will be incorporated in the broader theoretical pathway sketched in the second part of this chapter.

This theoretical pathway is used to depict the struggles and to overcome the problems found in the Bolivian literature regarding memory. Firstly, it starts with the study of social movements and contentious politics, which offers an analysis of the role of memories during the struggles that is either mediated by the actors' identities and culture or by the power of the stories and narratives themselves. Besides, the literature on social movements informs our analysis of the struggles, the actors involved, their economic and historical background, as well as their main political projects.

Secondly, the concept of collective memory and some epistemological discussions regarding temporality - how memory is created and reproduced through time – are presented. The “presentist” premises of the study of collective memory, as conceptualised by Maurice Halbwachs, turns our attention to the importance of contemporary human agency in managing and recalling memories, which are not perceived as autonomous entities. Processual approaches that have emerged in the scholarly field over the past decades focus on the history of a particular memory in relation to the unfolding of other events, highlighting the cumulative effect of its interaction with the state and the society through time. A complementary approach - highly influenced by the work of Paul Connerton and by anthropological Andean studies - integrates everyday bodily and spatial relations to the study of memory, pointing out the mechanisms that emotionally link contemporary actors with certain events of the past, such as ceremonies, visual spatial representations, pilgrimages, songs, literary expressions, popular tales, and the like.

A third theoretical discussion comes from cultural studies, in which memory has been developed since the early 1990s as a concept related to traumatic events, with a sometimes

contradictory task of promoting the healing of victims and fostering more ethical politics through slogans such as “never again”. Because some of the authors associated with this perspective discuss at length the role of specific narratives of negative past events in expressing new social struggles and creating political agency, their formulation allows us to come full circle and to rethink the concept of stories and narratives of social movements through the lens of memory. Moreover, this literature casts light on new developments in memory studies and highlights the particular contribution of this thesis to the field: a detailed analysis of the politics of memory and their reception among social actors.

A “pathway”, rather than a framework, better describes how this study relates to theory: each step of the “empirical” analysis is associated with specific ways of interpretation, and, when they become insufficient, new theoretical tools are presented successively. This approach matches the highly inductive and exploratory way this study was conducted but still aims to establish dialogues with theory and with other empirical realities.

Rebellions in twenty-first century Bolivia

This research benefits from the existence of comprehensive studies on the Bolivian political context from 2000 to 2005, despite the temporal proximity to the period. Unfortunately, the 2010 regional struggle in Potosí received less scholarly attention and the few articles dedicated to it will be mentioned in Chapter Six, which analyses its 19 days of civic strike. Besides, because it was a regional mobilisation, it sits uncomfortably in the accounts of Bolivian national politics and trends. Regarding the previous period, there are a couple of detailed studies with theoretically rich approaches. The most relevant of these are Raquel Gutierrez’s *Los ritmos del Pachakuti* (2008), Jeffery Webber’s *Red October* (2011b), Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson’s *Revolutionary Horizons* (2007), the collection of essays published by the Comuna group, entitled *Memorias de Octubre* (García Linera, Tapia, & Prada Alcoreza, 2004), all of them deeply committed to the horizons of social change that the period opened.

Gutierrez employs the Andean concept of *pachakuti* to understand the waves of mobilisation of the period. It literally means the inversion of time and space and was commonly translated as an indigenous concept of social revolution. Gutierrez stresses, however, that the *pachakuti* represents a deeper inversion of the order, because it implies a change that comes from “inside to outside” and not from “bottom to top”.⁶ Thus, Gutierrez analyses the period

⁶ “Basically, [the *pachakuti* is understood] as an inversion of the political order where what was inside, communities, and their intimate logic - and, of course, below - is now positioned as the visible, valid,

trying to understand “the rhythms” of this search for social change. Her “theoretical strategy” deliberately avoids the study of subjects and focuses on the conflict and how the social struggle unfolds. Consequently, she tries to discover how these struggles inaugurate new senses of society and question the subordination to the state in the moment they happen (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2008, pp. 19–38). The most interesting aspect of Gutierrez’s work is also its major weakness. Her excessive focus on the moment of mobilisation ignores the relationship these moments may have with the past, the historical formation of popular expectations towards the future or of popular distrust in relation to the state.

Webber’s book presents a much more complete analysis in this regard. To understand the “left indigenous cycle of extra-parliamentary insurrection between 2000 and 2005”, he builds an analytical framework that includes a combination of elaborate infrastructures of class-struggle; social-movement unionism; historical traditions of indigenous and working-class radicalism; combined-oppositional consciousness; and fierce (but insufficient) state repression (Webber, 2011b, p. 2). Through the first concepts (elaborate infrastructures of class-struggle and social-movement unionism), Webber describes the central characteristics of Bolivian working-class and peasant organisations engaged in the struggles of the period. The concepts of historical traditions and combined-oppositional consciousness, however, refer to an accumulation of rebellious memories that were expressed in a radical consciousness of the necessity of social change. Nevertheless, it is not Webber’s primary focus to understand how those memories were built and reconstructed during the period. Despite some very interesting insights regarding this topic (for instance, family-traditions of resistance and the life-stories of important leaderships), Webber’s work aims to build a more complete explanation of the events.

Hylton and Thomson draw explanations from the past more explicitly. In *Revolutionary Horizons* (2007), they employ the archaeological concept of horizons – “the phased strata of the earth and the remains of human settlement that are exposed by careful digging” (2007, p. 31) – to understand the layers of “causality and memory” (2007, p. 7) that explain the current political struggle in Bolivia. They identify two traditions of struggle: one concerned with national-popular demands, most fully expressed during the National Revolution of 1952, and the other concerned with indigenous demands, expressed during the anti-colonial struggles in end of the eighteenth century, such as the one led by Tupac Katari. Hence, the recent period would be a third revolutionary moment (a *pachakuti*) in the region and would combine these two opposite and

legitimate, “the outside” and “above”: it is a total upheaval in the way of living, not only a change in those who exercise the government and the rule” (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2008, p. 129).

complimentary traditions. This duality is also referred to by the authors as “rural and urban, Indian and *mestizo*-creole, Andean-communal and national popular history” (2007, pp. 145–146). Their book offers a brief historical account of the previous revolutionary struggles from 1780 to 1984 in Bolivia and how those two traditions succeeded or failed in meeting during this period. In the second part, the authors describe the neoliberal period and the contestation of it at the beginning of the twentieth century, during the so-called third revolutionary cycle.

The very influential Comuna group also published a collection of essays in 2004 regarding the events that occurred in the previous year.⁷ They presented two main concepts to understand the mobilisations: crisis and memory. While Luis Tapia characterises the political crisis as a struggle between the dominant power bloc and the (national) popular bloc (2004, p. 24), Álvaro García Linera argues that a double crisis of state structures occurred in the last period of mobilisations: first, a crisis of structures of long-duration, such as “mono-ethnicity” and “the primary accumulation export model unable to retain surpluses”, and second, a crisis of short-duration structures, related to the recent neoliberal and re-democratisation period (García Linera, 2004, pp. 32–36).

They also explicitly use the categories of “memories” to explain the mobilisation. García Linera argues that the repertoires of Indian uprising – “the siege, the control of topography, the expanded handling of time [*manejo dilatado del tiempo*], the strength of the mass, numerical superiority as a military technique, the confederation of communal militias, and the obstruction of communication routes between cities” - that appeared in Omasuyos, for example, did not vary much over the past centuries and are part of a “war memory” regulating “the tactical plans used by contemporary indigenous people to face the state” (2004, p. 47). According to him, an ethnic and Aymara memory was also “reactivated” during the struggle, supporting the idea of an “Aymara nation” (García Linera, 2004, p. 48). Raúl Prada has a more epistemological attachment to memory. He states that when historical memory is used to understand the present, “the past reveals the present” and the conception of history as lineal and evolutionary, “the present reveals the past”, is challenged (Prada Alcoreza, 2004, p. 92). Thus, memory appears as a key to access the struggles in 2003 and he identifies two main memories that have influenced the process: a short-term memory, related to national identity and to the nationalising effects of the Chaco War in the 1930s, and a long-term memory, related again to the anticolonial struggle of Tupac Katari (Prada Alcoreza, 2004, pp. 108–109).⁸

⁷ For a review in the work of the Comuna group, see Gonçalves (2013).

⁸ The Chaco War was fought between Bolivia and Paraguay between 1932 and 1935 over a territory thought to be rich in oil and that would grant Bolivia an easier access to the Atlantic ocean. Although Bolivia had a larger army, Paraguay managed to keep the majority of the territory under dispute by the

One of the main problems of these formulations is that history itself – the fact that certain events happened in the past - appears as the only explanatory category of memory. For instance, because the rebellion of Tupac Katari existed two hundred and thirty years ago and people claim to be inspired by it, these authors conclude that it was unproblematically kept through the centuries as a memory, without specifying the mechanisms that allowed its reproduction. In other words, intellectuals have used “memory” to explain struggle, but have not explained the reproduction of the memory itself.

A contribution to this debate was definitely made by a recent article from Linda Farthing and Benjamin Kohl (2013). They defend the thesis that contemporary Bolivian social movements are particularly effective in promoting coalitions and, therefore, successful struggle, because of their use of collective memory. This memory is rooted, according to them, in pervasive indigenous cultural practices: oral storytelling; perceptions of time and place, such as non-linear ideas of temporality; and reverence for ancestors, which creates a responsibility to those who came before and to the collective. Hence, collective memory is seen as “causal” to social mobilisation and activism. Despite rooting collective memories in indigenous practices, the authors do not restrict those practices to indigenous populations but perceive them as a feature of the whole of Bolivian society. They make an explicit effort to examine the mechanisms that allow collective memories to be used and reproduced and, by doing that, they subsidise the debate of memories in Bolivia (Farthing & Kohl, 2013). Differently from them, however, this study seeks to understand how memory unfolds in specific places and among specific populations. In doing that, the practices identified by Farthing and Kohl might or might not play a role and the state, as an agent that promotes memory, is as important as subaltern indigenous practices.

Before discussing the theoretical pathway that this work follows, however, a second strand of scholars of Bolivian society will be presented. The commentators of the country’s contemporary uprisings draw extensively on the work of previous scholars, who emphasised the centrality of concepts such as crisis, horizons, long-term and short-term memories, oral storytelling, the worship of ancestors and indigenous perceptions of temporalities. Many of the shortcomings analysed here have already appeared in these works, such as the almost mystical way in which memories reproduce themselves through generations, but they also cast light on important ways in which memories have been understood in relation to the constant political changes lived by Bolivian society.

end of the war. Around 250,000 Bolivians were mobilised for the war and around 52,000 of them died (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 244).

The past and Bolivian social struggles

During the 1980s, two authors' analyses were highly influential in local academia: René Zavaleta Mercado's notion of constitutive moment, crisis and intersecting temporalities, and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's idea of long and short-term memories in the Katarista movement.⁹ Presenting their contribution is a starting point to understand the experience of the Taller de Historia Oral Andina and to assess the more recent works on Bolivian struggles during the last fifteen years. Parallel to these intellectual developments, a group of Andeanist anthropologists, carrying out ethnographies among indigenous communities in the highland area, contributed to the understanding of indigenous perceptions of time and of the past.

Zavaleta Mercado's constitutive moments

Examining a very strong popular mobilisation that overthrew the dictatorship of Alberto Natusch in November 1979, Zavaleta Mercado characterises Bolivian society as *abigarrada* (mix of heterogeneous elements) because it contains temporal densities from distinct economic formations, which overlap in an uncombined way, as if the production modes were from different cultures.¹⁰ Those particular temporalities only meet through moments of political crisis, such as November 1979, which Zavaleta Mercado calls the constitutive moments of Bolivian society:

The crisis is the pathetic unity of the diverse, as the market is the daily concurrence of the diverse. The time of the factors (and the main difference between one mode of production and another is the quality of the human time) does not act in a continuous and confluent way, but in its critic manifestation. (...) The only time common to all those forms is the general crisis that covers it, i.e. politics. The crisis, therefore, not only reveals what is national in Bolivia, but also is in itself a nationalizer event. The diverse temporalities change with its eruption (Zavaleta Mercado, 2009, p. 216).

Within this perspective, different social identities (related to different modes of production and their temporalities), such as Indian and mining worker, can be shaped by present

⁹ The Katarista movement, named after Tupac Katari, emerged at the end of the military dictatorship and contributed to the foundation of the Confederación Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) in 1979, a new peasant national organisation that broke the clientelist relationship with the military regime. Chapters Two and Three will analyse this movement in detail.

¹⁰ This was also a period of political turmoil in the country, which had started after the end of the Hugo Banzer military dictatorship (1971-1978). Natusch executed the coup d'état against the constitutional government of Walter Guevara, but could only stay in power for 16 days because of the strong popular mobilisation against him.

events. These identities are responsive to contextual changes and to exogenous phenomena. The crisis makes it possible to think about a Bolivian nation even when the socio-economic conditions (i.e. market unification) do not exist. The events, writes Zavaleta Mercado, “have produced the unconscious premises of the unification, and in this regard it is not natural to conceive of the nation as a market” (2009, p. 215).

The author incorporates time in two different ways to explain Bolivian society. On the one hand, social groups have different temporalities, rhythms of life, related to their distinct modes of production. On the other, the crisis promotes the encounter of those social groups, making each of them remember their particular history in common, “as if today was an obligation that was sleeping in the past”. “For four centuries”, states Zavaleta, “the *señorío* [lordship] practiced a Mohoza Process against the Bolivian Indian” (2009, p. 221).¹¹ The moment of a crisis could also be a moment of intense social struggle (such as November 1979), which brings shared recollection of a particular event, perceived in different ways by different peoples.

Zavaleta’s path-breaking work was very influential on current intellectual generations. The idea of a constitutive moment that happens when the crisis occurs can be identified in the essays of the Comuna group and also in the study of Hylton and Thomson. The major problem with this perspective is that there is no necessary correspondence between what people actually remember as being a central feature of the past to explain their struggle and what the historians or sociologists judge it to be. As will be presented in Chapters Four and Five, during 2003, for example, people emphasised the War of the Pacific as a central narrative of their revolt much more than the Chaco War, which is considered a main “constitutive moment” of the Bolivian nation by most scholars. In collective memories, primary events are not necessarily “real, originating and influential”, they are instead related to ways in which a society draws on the past to unify, animate and orient itself (Schwartz, 1996, p. 911).

Zavaleta Mercado’s perspective, however, suffered from another shortcoming. Being perhaps too attached to the “national-popular” dimension of social struggle, he failed to give proper recognition to the emerging Katarista movement, considering it chiliastic and non-programmatic (2009, p. 220). By contrast, a whole subsequent generation of scholars has understood this renewed Indian identification as the greatest strength of the social movements in the period.¹² In many cases, these intellectuals were also engaged in the Katarista movement,

¹¹ The Mohoza Process was the judgment of Aymara rebels in Mohoza in the context of the Bolivian Federal War of 1899.

¹² See Xavier Albó, Josep M. Barnadas (Albó & Barnadas, 1984; Albó, 1991), Esteban Ticona Alejo (2005), and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (1987, 2010).

or in the broader indigenous peasant movement. Therefore, their work not only targeted the academic public, but was also used for the political formation of peasant leaderships.

Rivera's long and short-term memories

Silvia Rivera's seminal work, *Oppressed but not defeated: peasant struggles among the Aymara and Qhechwa in Bolivia, 1900-1980* (1987), coined the idea of a duality of Bolivian popular collective memory, which can be seen indirectly in the formulations of Hylton and Thomson and, more directly, of Prada. Rivera articulates a history of peasant struggles during the twentieth century and identifies two types of collective memories, one short-term and another long-term, which are combined with ideological positions:

I have identified two horizons of collective memory and ideological affiliation that have helped me understand the gradual differentiation that occurred between the Aymara peasant movement in the Altiplano and that of the Qhechwa peasants in Cochabamba. As for the Aymaras, long-term memory of the anti-colonial struggles of the 18th century was at work; it was reactivated by discrimination and rejection, and was at the core of the Aymara's movement ideology. But this reference of the distant past was always combined with and reinforced by their more recent experience of post-1952 peasant union power. As for Cochabamba peasants, it was this recent experience, or ideological horizon, based on short-term memory and on the *mestizo* cultural roots of the peasant movement, that gave structure and meaning to peasant activism in the 1970s (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 5).

Rivera draws on Ernst Bloch's idea of "diachronic contradictions" to explain the maintenance of that long-term memory. According to her, internal colonialism is the major contradiction of Bolivian society and, therefore, any national, popular or liberationist project must tackle this problem (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 155). So long-term memory is more relevant, since it is the source of an "autonomous political identity" which would not be incorporated into the clientelist networks of the "creole political class organizations" as the peasant syndicalism did (with short-term memory) after 1952 (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 151).

However, instead of referring broadly to colonialism, long-term memory in Rivera appears as a specific recollection: the rebellion of Tupac Katari, depicted in the name of the Katarista movement itself. It is possible to identify a proximity with Zavaleta Mercado's memory of the Mohoza Process when Rivera states that "the nightmare of the Indian siege continues to trouble the sleep of the Bolivian Creole class". She mentions the ideological needs of the present political struggle, contextualising the "reactivation" of Tupac Katari's image with the prejudice suffered by a new generation of young Aymaras in the 1960s, who "experienced the daily

phenomenon of ethnic discrimination, political manipulation and humiliation”, despite their “formal inclusion in the citizenry” after the 1952 revolution (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 149).¹³

There is a double movement in Rivera’s formulation that can result in a very unclear image of collective memories, a movement that will be avoided during this study. By merging enduring colonialism with the image of Tupac Katari, the concept of long-term memory does not differentiate between the needs of the past and the needs of the present. Even if she recognises that the present situation is crucial for the reactivation of past struggles, sometimes, long-term memory appears only as a latent force, waiting to be awakened. This metaphor, which can also be seen in Zavaleta Mercado (“as if today was an obligation that was sleeping in the past”), is turned into an almost psychoanalytical argument in a later work of Rivera:

Indian materialism does not aspire to be a homogeneous and continuous exposition of history: it does not believe in lineality, but rather seeks to bring the past up to date in images, in an iconic condensation where past and present become a coherent whole. The past persists in the collective unconscious as in a dream (for the defeated, more often a nightmare). The writing of history, then opens the dream to the vigilance of the present, giving verbal expression to that still unconscious knowledge sleeping in the twilight of exclusion and aphasia. Remembering and awakening are thus one and the same thing. (...) Like the dawn, identity emerges mysteriously from the night of the past through memory, by means of images (Taller de Historia Oral Andina & Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990, p. 180).

Even though Silvia Rivera’s work is focused on socio-political relations and, most of times, does not rely on psychoanalytical explanatory categories, her treatment of memory falls short of her otherwise powerful perspective on indigenous modernity and materialism. Despite the penetrating and inspiring words, the approach presented in the citation above has a problematic feature, since it suggests that the way an individual holds and processes a certain recalling can be transferred without mediating through collectivities. Here, I agree with Wulf Kansteiner, who argues that the conceptualisation of collective memories “exclusively in terms of the psychological and emotional dynamics of individual remembering” is inaccurate, since they should be understood as having “their own dynamics, for which we have to find appropriate methods of analysis” (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 186). If we are to choose collective memory as an analytical tool of society, the social world and its material expressions are more useful categories than an empirically unapproachable collective unconscious. These material expressions – be

¹³ The revolution erupted on 9 April 1952, and was at first a *coup d’état* organised by the nationalist party Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) with part of the army as a response to the annulment of the 1951 elections, won by the MNR candidate, Victor Paz Estenssoro. The revolution quickly took over the streets and mining centres, with popular sectors occupying army barracks. In a couple of days, the army was defeated and the MNR was took power. The main policies that were carried out by the new government were: nationalisation of the tin mines, universal suffrage and agrarian reform (1953). See Dunkerly (1984, pp. 1–82).

they records, books, speeches, places or objects – allow us to better understand the nuances experienced by collective memories through time, since they are far more complex than latent forces that simply “awaken”, and how human agency has constantly shaped them.

Oral history: THOA's experience

Rivera was not only influenced by the emergence of the Katarista movement; many of her reflections on memory were thought of in the context of an oral history project called Taller de Historia Oral Andina (THOA, Andean Oral History Workshop), which was formed by her and a group of students in 1983 (Harris in THOA 1992, p. 101). Initially, it was a module in the Sociology course at UMSA (Universidad Mayor de San Andrés) in La Paz, but it turned into a research project to support the oral history of indigenous groups to counteract the official or orthodox Marxist interpretations of Bolivian history that prevailed in the university.¹⁴ In this context, students of Aymara origins, the first generation to benefit from obligatory rural education after the 1952 revolution, embraced the research project as a way to fight racism and to revise Bolivian historiography (Harris in THOA, 1992, p. 101).

The first research project of THOA was an investigation of Santos Marka T'ula, an important leader during the 1920s and 1930s, who organised the resistance of many indigenous communities against the expansion of the *haciendas* (Taller de Historia Oral Andina, 1992). The study of indigenous rebellions and leadership movements before 1952 was particularly important because it allowed a revision of traditional accounts, which depicted the rebellions as “irrational, violent outbursts”. Instead, THOA's investigation discovered that:

(...) there was a growing ideology, a specific program of demands and a wide leadership network which, through legal struggles and, on occasions, open confrontations, sought to defend the indigenous Andean community – *ayllu* – from being usurped by the ruling *criollo* class and incorporated into their large estates (Taller de Historia Oral Andina & Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990, p. 151).¹⁵

The research used archival documents but the main sources of information were the testimonies provided by the witnesses of the period, who still lived in many communities. For the academics involved in the project, oral history was a means to recover an anticolonial and

¹⁴ See the testimonies of Vitaliano Soria and Esteban Ticona (Erbol 2013) and the testimonies of Lucila Criales (Cúneo & Gascó, 2014).

¹⁵ *Ayllu* is a political and geographical unit that gathers together a group of communities and can be considered as equivalent to an ethnic unit (see the work of Harris on the Layme *ayllu*, 2000). It was part of the political and social organisation of the indigenous communities before the spread of the *haciendas* and is used today in zones that were not occupied by *haciendas* (such as Northern Potosí) or in zones that seek to re-construct their pre-Columbian political organisation at a local level.

indigenous memory (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 65). It was seen as “subversive with respect to ‘power’” because it would break with the positivist ideology of progress (Taller de Historia Oral Andina & Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990, p. 180). Oral history was particularly important among old people (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 65) and women:

It is inspired, rather, by an old Andean tradition, specifically female, which conceives of history as a woven cloth; it consists in recognizing the warp and weft, the texture, the forms of relationships, in knowing the back from the front, the value and significance of the detailed pattern, and so on. In other words, we are trying to read in the book of life that which has never been recorded in written form; we are attempting to capture the image brought to mind and revealed in the moment of the interview before it is lost again to silence (Taller de Historia Oral Andina & Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990, p. 180).

There is a sense of urgency in THOA’s work, a need to compile and register all those voices before rapid social change - which had already begun with the 1952 revolution - condemn all those experiences to oblivion.¹⁶ Against forgetting, THOA not only acted to register those voices for the academic public, but also had an active role in promoting the memories of the topics studied in the researched areas. One example of this was the act organised by THOA and the local peasant union to remember the death of the indigenous leader Santos Marka T’ula in Ch’uxña, his birthplace, on 13 November 1984 (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 86).¹⁷ The act of remembering is seen as a “contemporary Aymara, indigenous and political act”, as a “reinforcement of the historical identity of Andean native people and dissemination of the struggle of hundreds of native *ayllus* and former *haciendas*” (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 65). Once they formed part of the community’s own celebrations, these activities would insert those figures and stories into the collective memory of the community in an enduring way.

THOA also published its studies in Aymara in pamphlets, which were distributed among new generations of literate Indian peasants (Harris in THOA & Gawne-Cain, 1992) and were used in the classrooms of rural schools (Stephenson, 2002, p. 110). A radio series of ninety episodes in Aymara on the life of Santos Marka T’ula was launched in 1986 and was such a success that it has been broadcast three times since (Stephenson, 2002, p. 106). Studying THOA’s impact on Bolivian society, Marcia Stephenson proposes that the organisation has contributed to the formation of an “indigenous counterpublic sphere”:

Through these interactive broadcasts, THOA was able to create a legitimate space open to the presence of marginalized others within the public sphere. THOA’s investigation consequently set

¹⁶ See the testimony of Matilde Colque: “People before knew a lot more, I know less. All that knowledge is coming to an end now, the *q’aras* [non-indigenous people] want it all to disappear. What can we do? They are powerful. Our people who study just want to become like them” (Taller de Historia Oral Andina & Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990, p. 177).

¹⁷ 13 November 1983 is also the date of THOA’s foundation.

into motion an extensive process of collective reevaluation of the history of native identity that initiated a series of similar projects in various communities throughout the altiplano (Stephenson, 2002, p. 107).

The experience of THOA also had an important political impact in Bolivia. During the 1990s, in the context of national reforms that recognised indigenous rights, the organisation actively promoted the reconstitution of the *ayllu* and inserted decolonisation at the centre of national public discussion. THOA also played a relevant role in the formation of CONAMAQ (Consejo de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyo) in 1997, a federation that stated a clear indigenous identity in opposition to the prevailing peasant national organisation, CSUTCB (Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia).¹⁸

THOA contrasts with the former examples because its theoretical propositions are formulated within a project of creating spaces of memory for the political and cultural strengthening of indigenous groups. It is impossible to study collective memory in Bolivia without mentioning or taking into consideration the huge impact THOA's activities had in fostering and recuperating indigenous struggles and heroes of the past. The organisation has dedicated its efforts to consciously promoting ways in which to replicate memories, such as oral storytelling, rites and pamphlets, while the content of those memories, such as the suffering of Santos Marka T'ula, were focused on individuals, particular events and experiences that could be understood as a still ongoing oppression experienced by indigenous people.

Ethnographies of memory

Another approach to the way indigenous people relate to the past is to be found in anthropological scholarship on the Bolivian highlands. Identifying a distinction between the way communities perceived and talked about their past and "history" as a Western academic field, researchers in this discipline depict a much more intimate role played by memory in the daily lives of Andean communities.

In an article from 1987, Harris and Bouysse-Cassagne discuss the idea of *pacha*, a word that refers to both specific epochs and spaces, drawing on the Aymara dictionary of Ludovico Bertonio, written at the beginning of the colonial period, and on present day ethnography among the Laymi in northern Potosí. They study how the ancient notion of *pachas* (*taypi*, *puruma* and *pachakuti*) was translated to Christian perspectives during colonial times, creating the idea of *alax pacha* (heaven), *manqa pacha* (hell) and *aka pacha* (world of the living). The

¹⁸ For a comparative perspective between CONAMAQ and CSUTCB, see Freitas (2013, pp. 104–156).

Christian scheme had to accommodate itself into a previous metaphysics of Aymara thought; in particular, the dichotomy between heaven and underworld was not equivalent to “good *versus* bad” but to an idea of order *versus* danger (also creativity) (Bouysse-Cassagne & Harris, 1987, p. 53). The *pachakuti*, a total change of order, which was used by Gutiérrez (2008) to understand the recent period of social mobilisation, was then related to the underworld, to a process that makes what is inside (under) turn outside (up). It carries a non-teleological, non-linear perspective of history in which the world of the dead (past) may hold the creative forces for the future.

In his ethnography of an Aymara peasant community in the province of Larecaja in the department of La Paz, Andrew Canessa has identified the *chullpa pacha*, the period of dawn, as the starting point for local accounts of the past. The *chullpas* were the people that lived in the darkness, described as wild beings. They died when the sun first came out, which is an event related to the Incas and Christianity and marks the beginning of the *inka pacha* (Canessa, 2012b, pp. 80–85).¹⁹ The arrival of the Spanish is associated with the *patruna pacha*, the period marked by the dominance of the *patrones* (landowners) in the region. The Spanish killed the Inka and their power was more associated with their control of literacy than with Christianity or God (Canessa, 2012b, pp. 85–86). Accordingly, this community in Laracaja explains the end of the *patruna pacha* through an account of a war with a neighbouring community rather than through the 1953 Agrarian Reform (Canessa, 2012b, pp. 90–118). All the entities that populated the past, however, are still present in people’s lives today, according to Canessa. The Pachamama, “source of world’s productivity” worshipped with libations and animal sacrifices, is identified with *chullpas* and the underworld and the Inca sometimes speaks to people as the wind (Canessa, 2008).

The *chullpas* again play a key role in the way some communities in the region of Uyuni Salt Lake in Lípez, Southwest Potosí, relate to their past. Francisco Gil García has studied how the community of Santiago K interpreted neighbouring ruins as a defensive fortress of the *chullpas*, during a period identified with constant war. Again, the *chullpas* symbolise an uncivilised alterity and the ruins are the space that generates the representation of this ancient war in local inhabitants’ narratives, in a process of spatialisation memory (Gil García, 2005).

¹⁹ *Chullpa* is a name also given to funeral buildings containing the mummified bodies of ancestors, which were places of worship before the arrival of the Spaniards (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 42; Gil García, 2005). In the region of the Uyuni Salt Lake, for example, people say the *chullpas* were small people, since they are associated with the mummies (Gil García, 2005). Today, they are associated with creative and dangerous forces of the *manqa pacha*, while the sun and the civilising forces brought with it is related to the *alax pacha* (Bouysse-Cassagne & Harris, 1987).

Thomas A. Abercrombie's ethnography on the K'ultas, in Southeast Oruro, is a compelling contribution that places memory at the centre of the understanding of Andean societies. He identifies three main ways in which the social memory of the group is maintained: mythical stories, libation sequences (*amt'aña t'akis*, memory paths in Aymara) and the *fiesta-cargo* system of authority (*p'ista t'akis*, the paths related to the "career" of an authority). In narratives about the past, the K'ultas tell a very similar story to the ones told in the Larecaja and López. *Chullpas* were burnt by Tatala, who symbolises Christ and the sun. This original myth, with Tatala (the sun) and the *chullpas* (the darkness) representing "complementary but mutually exclusive realms" (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 328), is revived in all cyclical temporal units, such as the day and the year. They also represent the world of the above (*alax pacha*) and the underworld (*manxa pacha*), symbolised in all sorts of spatial orientation in everyday lives, such as the construction of houses and the directions people face when doing libations, relations of kinships, etc. (Abercrombie, 1998, pp. 326–346).

The memory paths, *amt'aña t'akis*, appear during the rituals of libations, *ch'allas*, in which people drink and pour alcohol or *chicha* (maize beer) to a series of entities. The place of libation, a sacred altar called *misa*, is a "channel" through which the *ch'allas* reach the most varied beings and deities (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 347). The libation sequences are a sort of mapping device which enumerates kinship relations, animals, saints, mountains and other forces related to nature and the underworld. The movement follows concentric circles, starting from nearby beings and finishing in entities faraway (Abercrombie, 1998, pp. 346–360).

Lastly, the *fiesta-cargo t'aki* is a system that intercalates the responsibility to sponsor religious festivities and to occupy a position of authority. The most important career path, the one that leads to the position of *jilaqata*, the main authority, lasts about twenty years (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 370). The handover of sponsorship responsibilities occurs during religious festivities, when ritual battles between the *ayllus* take place and "Kulta society as a whole and all its parts reflect the continuing import of the cycle set in motion when Tatala battled the Chullpas" (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 374).

These studies in the field of social anthropology shed light on a radically different perception of temporality shared among the most diverse Andean communities that was almost entirely ignored by the other academic disciplines seeking to understand contemporary Bolivian society. The mythical story of the sun against the *chullpas* certainly plays a much bigger role as a primary memory event, a story that orients and unifies a community, as defined by Schwartz

(1996, p. 911), than the eighteenth century rebellion of Tupac Katari, even though these communities participated in the uprising and were deeply affected by it.²⁰

The actors studied within these works are different from those analysed in the present thesis, who are part of much bigger communities, either urban (Potosí and El Alto) or Aymara peasant with a long-standing and intense interaction with the Bolivian state (Omasuyos). This literature, however, presents important insights regarding how memory relates to space and to everyday activities that reinforce and reproduce social collectivities. These insights cast new light to the study of the social mobilisations in 2003 and 2010 and can be further elaborated with the assistance of Paul Connerton's approach to collective memory, which will be presented later in this chapter.

As explained earlier, the next three sections will cover a theoretical pathway that will seek to overcome the problems found in the Bolivian literature regarding memory (such as the psychoanalytical approach and understanding important sociopolitical events as necessarily important memories), complement its insights with a more general theoretical discussion (not only based on a regional or national reality), and contextualise the specific contribution of this research to memory and social movements studies.

Contentious Politics and Culture

Over the past 20 years, the call to integrate culture and politics has become widespread among scholars of the two fields (Berezin, 1997). In the study of contentious politics, this movement can be illustrated by two different intellectual developments: the new social movements theory emerging in the European context as a criticism of orthodox Marxism, and the framing approach stemming from the resource-mobilisation theories in the United States, which appeared as a criticism of collective behaviourism.²¹ In the next sections, both these developments and their applicability to this research will be presented, since they provide us with initial categories of assessment of the struggles studied.

²⁰ In K'ulta, for example, local *ayllus* joined the rebellion (Abercrombie, 1998, pp. 291–300).

²¹ This section draws on the reviews on resource-mobilisation and new social movement theories of Cohen (1985), Canel (1997) and Webber (2011b, pp. 3–11), and on new social movement theories and the framings of Berezin (1997, pp. 374–376) and Jansen (2007, pp. 956–958).

Identifying the actor

The label of “new social movements” was used by scholars to understand those groups that appeared in the post-1968 European context, which were more associated with issues of identity (women and gay rights) and values (peace and environmental movements) than with mainstream political ideologies. The term was commonly used to depict “movements that were not based on claims for material advantages”, such as the labour movement (Berezin, 1997, p. 375).²² The new paradigm developed from criticisms of the orthodox Marxist approach, mainly the reductionist assumption that actors’ identities are a mere reflection of their economic class interests (Canel, 1997, p. 190; Webber, 2011b, p. 4).

Latin American scholars embraced the new paradigm enthusiastically. From the 1970s on in the continent, the rapid urbanisation process combined with the state-repression of the military regimes fuelled the emergence of new social actors, such as the women’s movement (Webber, 2011b, p. 6). Emerging indigenous and ethnic movements were also objects of intense attention and analysis through the lenses of the encounter between politics and culture (Alvarez, Dagnino, & Escobar, 1998; Hale, 1997). This development was matched in Bolivia by the new scholarly attention given to the Katarista movement (Albó, 1987; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987).

The new social movement approach, however, has been criticised for “bending the analytical stick too far, toward a seemingly autonomous cultural sphere” (Webber, 2011b, p. 6). Recent Marxist approaches in Latin America have called for continued validity of the political-economic methods and for a reconstituted a class analysis that incorporates gender and ethnic issues (Webber, 2011b, p. 7). Inspired by the work of Ellen Wood, E. P. Thompson, Antonio Gramsci and David Camfield, this perspective defines class as a relation and as a historical formation, which depends on the historical time and specific cultural context of the class actors. Even though class is still related to the production world and labour relationships, class-relationships are seen as pervasive in all aspects of social life, which allows for non-orthodox Marxist analysis incorporating other social relationships (Webber, 2011b, pp. 16–17).

The approach adopted in this research recognises the need to present and analyse the immediate economic situation of the actors and to contextualise their social formation historically. However, this approach is less conclusive and more inductive in respect of the actors’ identities. It does not deny the existence of class and of labour relationships and their

²² The main references of the new social movements theories are Jean L. Cohen (1983, 1985), Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001), Alberto Melucci (1980, 1989), Claus Offe (1985) and Alain Touraine (1988).

key role in shaping identities but also does not transform them into a main category of analysis. These rebellious identities are treated as specific to historical experiences and places; they are not abstract positions: the miner, instead of class; the indigenous and peasant, instead of ethnicity. This is not a denial of these categories, but treating them as rooted experiences casts light on the actual dynamics between separated abstract concepts in the real world. The reader who gives priority to class relations will notice that indigeneity is intrinsically defined in the Andes as a position in the production world; what is the *q'ara* if not the parasite that lives off others' work? Conversely, the one who emphasises ethnicity and culture will be able to see here how even the most classic proletarian identity, such as the state miner, is defined in terms of its complementarity and opposition to the indigenous.

Strategies and stories

Resource-mobilisation theories are generally associated with the rational-choice turn in the 1960s and 1970s, which questioned the collective-behaviour approaches then hegemonic in North-American social thought.²³ “Despite their differences, all versions of the resource-mobilisation approach analyse collective action in terms of the logic of strategic interaction and cost-benefit calculations” (Cohen, 1985, p. 675). A perhaps exaggerated version of this utilitarian logic was given in the pioneering work of Mancur Olson (1965), who states a classic collective action problem: if members of one group respond to individual incentives to act for the benefit of the group as a whole, the bigger the group of people who will benefit from the results of collective action, bigger the possibility of free-riders and, therefore, the smaller the chance of collective action happening. Scholars then turned to the idea of resource-mobilisation as a way to explain why, despite rational-choice predictions, collective actions happened. Emphasis was then given to the role of the leaders in strategically mobilising the resources available and in the manoeuvrability of these resources, which could range from material (money, manpower, means of communication) to non-material issues (authority, solidarity, etc.) (Canel, 1997, p. 207).

An early criticism of this approach was given by Murray Edelman's theory on symbolic politics. According to this, human ability to “manipulate sense perceptions symbolically” permits, on the one hand, “complex reasoning and planning and consequent efficacious action”, but allows, on the other, “firm attachments to illusions, misperceptions, and myths and

²³ Main authors of the resource mobilisation theory include William A. Gamson (1975), John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald (1977), Anthony Oberschall (1973), Mancur Olson (1965), Sidney Tarrow (2011) and Charles Tilly (1978).

consequent misguided or self-defeating action". Therefore, political behaviour cannot be explained as a consequence of "fairly stable individual wants, reasoning, attitudes, and empirically based perceptions" (Edelman, 1971, p. 2).

These criticisms emerged later with the inclusion of the framing concept as a development of traditional resource-mobilisation theory. In an article published in 1986, David Snow and his associates attempted to bridge resource-mobilisation theory with social psychology through the concept of "frame", borrowed from Goffmann. A frame provides actors with a "schemata of interpretation"; making "events and occurrences" meaningful within their "life space and the world at large", they "organise experience and guide action, whether individual or collective" (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986, p. 464). Such approach, however, was still within the paradigm of resource-mobilisation theory because framings were considered the result of the rational actions of leaders. "In Snow's original formulation, a frame was a bounded and easily recognizable narrative package that activists could impose on events" (Berezin, 1997, p. 375).

More recently, other scholars in social movement theory have started to replace the idea of "framing" with the less charged category of "storytelling". When studying fledgling movements such as the sit-ins in the United States during the 1960s, Francesca Poletta realised that many of the assumptions of framing theorists, such as a clear identification of otherness and of the group's agency, did not fit into the narratives told by activists about their struggle, which was held up against "apathy" and started "spontaneously" (2006, p. 35). Yet, these stories, which were not the result of careful and intentional framing, fostered mobilisation. Poletta suggests that it is precisely the ambiguity of a story that can be decisive in the mobilisation process. Stories make sense of the unfamiliar through assimilating "confusing events into familiar frameworks" such as narratives of birth or healing (Poletta, 2006, p. 34). The stories told to depict the (supposed) spontaneity of the sit-ins movement ("it was like a fever", "BOOM – it happened") were attractive precisely because they contained "mystery and risk within the familiarity of a ubiquitous discursive form" (Poletta, 2006, p. 45).

The power of stories, however, has been used to understand not only fledgling social movements but also the other end of the spectrum of collective action: social revolutions. Eric Selbin argues that they are an indispensable item in revolutionary processes, since "the stories we tell define us as people; we create, see, and manage the world through them" and "we use them to forge community". According to him, when people "coalesce around one powerful story", "it is often a heady concoction and concatenation of names (particularly 'heroes' and martyrs), dates, places, grievances, and methods, woven together into some sort of serviceable and usable (hi)story" (Selbin, 2008, pp. 131–132).

All the approaches presented in this section contribute in some fashion to a theoretical strategy to understand the struggles in 2003 and 2010 in Bolivia, which will be the first steps in the analysis of each of the regions studied here. Chapters Two, Four and Six all contain a presentation of the immediate economic situation of the group, a historical review of its relationship with the state and a characterisation of the main rooted identities of the actors. However, when studying the narratives that appeared during the struggle, social movements and revolution theories still lack an important dimension: the temporality of the stories being told by the actors. With the exception of Selbin, the literature presented in this last section “still suffers from an ahistorical perspective on culture that neglects the presence of the past in symbolic struggles” (Jansen, 2007, p. 958). In order to add this temporal quality to the narratives told by the actors, and to respond to some of the methodological problems faced in the Bolivian literature on struggle and memory, the next two sections will engage more deeply with theories of collective memory.

Defining collective memory and its temporalities

When we talk about memory in our daily lives, we usually relate it to an individual process, lived subjectively and understood as an experience kept in some part of our brain that is recovered when a stimulus happens in the present. In common language, we use the words “memory”, “recall”, “remembrance” to make reference to events we observed or participated in, without mediation, which we recover as witnesses able to confirm their reality status. Thus, at first, the concept of collective memory causes a double estrangement, related to the scale of the subject that holds the memory, on the one hand, and the memory’s temporality on the other.

Regarding the scale estrangement, memory seems to be an expression that can only be applied to individuals, so the term “collective memory” would be considered an imprecise metaphor. There are reasons, however, to use the concept of memory beyond this common sense. As pointed out by the pioneering work of Maurice Halbwachs, even the most personal memories are defined by “social frameworks” (*cadres sociaux*), which allow individuals to conceive, identify and express memories (Halbwachs, 1980, 1992). The clearest example of these frameworks is language (Bosi, 1994, p. 56). Social groups provide individuals with the means and the occasions to express memories, for example, the remembrances of childhood fostered by family gatherings, which are recalled to a person externally (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38).

As a logical consequence of this argument (here we identify the temporal estrangement), collective memory exceeds the lifespan of individuals: “The memory of a society extends as far as the memory of the groups composing it” (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 82). In the case of religious communities, for instance, collective memories might last for millennia. This does not mean that references to the past are kept unchanging: rather, they are constantly recreated and renewed by the activity of the groups that maintain them. In Halbwachs’s formulation, the most important feature of memory is its meaningfulness in the present, rather than its accuracy while reporting the past, a concern that orients history. Memories are intrinsically related to the contemporary needs of the groups, “the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 40).

How to define collective memory then? It is a phenomenon that departs from the present towards the past, which can be explained both at the individual level, as autobiographical memories formed through social frameworks, and at the collective level, as public narratives that are expressed through monuments, museums or political discourses. Collective memory corresponds to “a wide variety of mnemonic processes, practices, and outcomes” that interact and occur at the individual and collective level (Olick, 2007, p. 34). In this study, we combine a methodology that analyses both personal perceptions of past events (through interviews) and more public and collective expressions, such as academic and literary works, commemorations, songs, monuments, and the relationship of these past narratives with space.

Another constitutive feature of memory is that it entails a narrative character, which simplifies complex human experiences into certain patterns. In this research, we will see how memories presented in the context of social struggle actually depict prototypical events, with familiar metaphors and defined “good” and “bad” characters, heroes and enemies. As noted by the historian Hayden White, all narrativising discourses serve “the purpose of moralising judgements”, arise out “of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary” (1987, p. 24).

For this transition between complex human experiences and meaningful simplified representations of them to happen, a process of forgetting is always necessary. “All memories are ‘created’ in tandem with forgetting; to remember everything would amount to being overwhelmed by memory”, argued Marita Sturken (1997, p. 7). Thus, for some narratives of the past to be meaningful during struggles, aspects of their historical reality are forgotten, as well as other stories related to other possible meaningful events. In the methodology section, we will discuss further the events that were “forgotten” in the context of the Bolivian mobilisations.

The conceptualisation of collective memory as presented above is profoundly marked by the present. It focuses on the subjects that remember: the contemporary social actors that rescue some events from oblivion, seek to use them to give sense to other events, and reframe past experiences into meaningful stories. The “presentist” approach can be traced to Halbwachs, who emphasised memory as phenomenon related to the present needs of groups, but has also been applied by more contemporary authors, who define social or collective memory as “present pasts” (Huyssen, 2003; Terdiman, 1993).

This perspective assists us in avoiding the naturalisation of memories by emphasising the agency of social actors and the necessary differences between past experiences and their representation through narratives. It encourages us to think about how present demands actually inform which of the aspects of past historical events are going to be recovered. Indigenous government, the idea of a “stolen development”, the fear of depopulation: all of these are contemporary concerns of certain groups in Bolivian society that could be successfully projected to past events analysed in this research.

However, this projection from present to past does not tell the whole story and should be problematised. The “presentist” approach, when combined with more utilitarian views of politics, can easily turn collective memories into “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), or, more recently, “political usages of the past” (Hartog & Revel, 2001; Levi, 2001). Both approaches, coming from history, alert us to the ideological manipulations of the past conducted by governments and political groups. In a certain way, they want to draw a stark line between history, as an academic field compromised by issues of validity and bias, and all the other expressions of the past that appear in our present lives, contaminated with exogenous political agendas. While this “instrumentalist” view is useful to highlight the conscious manipulation that is in fact conducted by many governments and groups, it tends to oversimplify the dynamics behind a politically-oriented recovery of the past. It normally limits academic inquiry into the nature of the processes being analysed, since it suggests that agency comes only from the actor “using” the past and not also from the receptors of the message, who are restricted to a narrow position of “manipulated” public. Moreover, it implies that the traditions recovered are mere creations, without an actual relationship with people’s perceptions of their past experiences and present lives.²⁴

²⁴ In the Bolivian context, two otherwise very interesting articles were considerably limited by the use of these theoretical approaches. Perrier-Bruslé (2013) uses the concept of “political uses of the past” to analyse Evo Morales’ renovated maritime demand, which would provide him with more political legitimacy, without considering the fact that, precisely because the demand is already hugely popular, it might create serious problems for the government if the negotiation fails. John-Andrew McNeish (2002),

Other critics of this perspective have pointed out that the instrumentalist approach has overestimated leaders' abilities to manipulate the past, a criticism already held against framing theorists regarding their manoeuvring of cultural resources. Elites and intellectuals are also constrained by the immediate social context, such as the "group's position in economy, its demographic strength, and its access to political decision-making process" (McBride, 2001, pp. 35–36),²⁵ the "criteria of the historiography of the time", and the "texture and inner coherence of the myths and motifs themselves", which must be in harmony with the "peculiar flavour" of a "traditional past" (Smith, 1986, p. 178). This is why particular patterns can be recognised – "hero figures, the degree of sacredness, the atmosphere of key events" – in different national histories (Smith, 1986, p. 178). As McBride puts it, "memories take root most successfully when they are patterned in accordance with the culture's accepted customs of telling stories about itself" (2001, p. 36).

The processual approach

In the study of collective memory, there is a reasonable consensus "against unqualified instrumentalist positions" (Jansen, 2007, p. 960). This criticism is also applicable to Halbwachs, whose presentist approach, if "pushed to its ultimate consequences, would suggest that there is no continuity in history altogether" (Coser, 1992, p. 26). One scholar who has dealt with the problem is Barry Schwarz, who emphasised a double character of collective memories, which are both presentist and "cumulative" (Coser, 1992, p. 26). They are cumulative because they stem from primary events that had some factual significance, and this internal significance was kept through generations. The collective memories were then enriched, rather than replaced, by the superimposition of new people and events. At the same time, Schwartz states that it is not this factual significance that determines the strength of memories, but actually the fact that their importance and priority "have become and remained convenient objects of consensus among later generations" (Schwartz, 1982, p. 396).

This cumulative characteristic of memory has been transformed in later works into a more elaborated "processual" approach. While analysing the history of certain commemorative

applying the concept of "reinvention of traditions", analyses the impact of the recovering of the history of the precolonial Quillacas federation among the population of Santuario de Quillacas. He highlights how this recovery was used by local elites for their personal interests but fails to point out how the daily problems faced by the local population, such as border conflicts, were counteracted by the memory of a larger unity.

²⁵ To illustrate it, McBride cites the remarks of McGarry and O'Leary on the Northern Ireland conflict: "The Northern Irish are only exceptional in that their debates, conflicts and wars have not been resolved, an irresolution which owes little to local atavism" (cited in McBride 2001, p. 36).

events, Jeffrey Olick identifies a process of path-dependency in the reproduction of these commemorations. He uses Bakhtin's concept of genre to highlight "commemoration's role in producing its own circumstances, for earlier commemorations shape later ways of seeing, whether or not subsequent speakers are aware of any specific earlier commemoration" (Olick, 1999, p. 383). Thus, this approach goes beyond a mere "unmediated dialectic of past and present (in which the past affects a present which interprets the past)" (Jansen, 2007, p. 961). Each point of recollection, carrying its own interplay between past and present, posed the conditions for the next one; in other words, the order matters (Olick, 1999, p. 399).

This approach thus calls for detailed investigation of how memories are reproduced through time, from the moment the events happen until the "most recent" present situation in which they are remembered. In this research, we use the processual perspective to investigate how certain memories of past events interacted with political struggles and state policies. For instance, the 1979 centenary of the loss of the Pacific territories – expressed in official commemorations, and a boom in academic writings and artistic works, such as the movie *Amargo Mar* – had an impact on Bolivian foreign policy and helped to undermine the military dictatorship of Hugo Bánzer. Also, the fourth centenary of the foundation of Potosí, celebrated in 1945, provided the context for the emergence of the civic movement in the city and the first organised petition regarding local development and the preservation of local colonial heritage. These encounters between public memories and politics have shaped the perception of certain events in Bolivian society and have informed how past events are currently understood.

However, the reconstruction of the path of repeated public commemoration might not be possible. Certain events might well disappear from public life and reappear decades, centuries and even millennia later as an event to be commemorated, as the celebration of the battle of Masada by Jewish Israelis (Schwartz, Zerubavel, & Barnett, 1986). Or they might be kept through oral storytelling, impossible to have its development through time analysed unless the researcher is very lucky to find an oral archive that covers the issue and the period studied. Finally, because this memory path-dependency requires some commemorative continuity, most of the empirical references to these studies are promoted by institutional actors, be they speeches or monuments. Therefore, there is little deeper investigation into the reception of this memory among the public, which is not equivalent to their representation, as pointed out by Kansteiner (2002).

Everyday memory reproduction

In an early critique of Halbwachs in 1925, Marc Bloch highlighted one of his main weaknesses as the lack of a proper study of the mechanisms behind the reproduction of memory among individuals and groups:

For a social group that exists longer than the life of one man to have a memory, it is not enough that the members at one point in time hold in their minds the representations of the group's past. It is also necessary that the oldest members of the group transmit these representations to the youngest. We are free to use the term 'collective memory,' but we must remember that at least a part of what we are referring to is simply everyday communication between individuals (Bloch, 2011, p. 153).

Bloch uses the example of the role played by grandparents in rural societies, whose social tasks included educating the children in an epoch when schools and other forms of public education did not exist. He then inquires whether this situation could explain "the perpetuation of the traditional way of life" among these societies (Bloch, 2011, p. 153). Paul Connerton takes Bloch's suggestion very seriously when he conceptualises a theory of collective memory based on the investigation of "acts of transfer" (Connerton, 1989).

Connerton distinguishes two categories of "acts of transfer": commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. As a type of rite, commemorative ceremonies have a "stylised, stereotyped and repetitive" character, which means that they have a strong element of invariance and continuity with the past. Moreover, people who enact a rite are implicitly agreeing with its meaning, since a rite can give significance to the "life of those who perform them", to the "whole life of a community" (Connerton, 1989, pp. 44–45). Formalism and performativity are central features that explain why rites are very effective "mnemonic devices". In this regard, commemorative ceremonies are especially important because they "explicitly refer to prototypical persons and events"; they have a "re-enactment" narrative character (Connerton, 1989, pp. 61–70). In this respect, commemoration appears as means of both representation and reception of memory.

The same basic mechanism of performativity lies behind the idea of bodily practices sustaining social memory. Connerton distinguishes between three different practices: techniques (such as hand gestures shared by southern Italians), proprieties (such as table manners) and ceremonies (such as the court etiquette at Versailles). All of these entail cognitive contents - informing social hierarchies, community belongings, etc. - that are incorporated as habits and strengthen groups' identities (Connerton, 1989, pp. 87–88).

Connerton's emphasis on performative and everyday devices of memory reproduction is evident in his later account of the relationship between memory and space, in which he

reminds us that a stable system of place is essential to the “art of memory”. He specifically cites the ancient practices of memorising, the “method of loci”, that would store information in mental places, in which “the order of the places preserves the order of the things that have to be remembered” (Connerton, 2009, p. 5). As examples of place-related elements that foster memory, he cites monuments, toponyms, houses, streets, familiar places that “give us a sense of emplacement through their incorporation into the corporeal life of my habitual movements” (Merleau-Ponty cited in Connerton, 2009, p. 32). Therefore, it is very important, when talking about places, to consider their interaction with human bodies, and this is why pilgrimage is so important for Connerton (2009, p. 17). This approach is similar to “ethnographies of memory,” reviewed earlier in this chapter, since it emphasises how certain memories of the past, such as the story of Tatala against the *chullpas*, are incorporated into daily ritual activities and are related to specific spaces or spatial dispositions.

One of the main problems with applying Connerton’s theory to this research is his overarching focus on collective memories as a stabilising factor of human experience and to help explain the “inertia of social structures” (1989, p. 102). Indeed, it could be said that his theoretical contribution allows less discontinuity than the processual model. However, Connerton’s main insight – the relationship between memory and how bodies interact with space – can provide us with keys to explain how discontinuous memories can take “roots” in certain groups. Even without performing a certain narrative through commemorative celebrations during the time span that separates the present from the event in the past, groups can relate a new narrative of the past with foundations of their everyday lives. For instance, one of the cases studied here, the memory of the rebellion of Tupac Katari, was apparently absent from national public debate during the nineteenth century, and only emerged forcefully after the activism of the Kataristas in the 1960s and 1970s. However, despite this relatively new reappearance, the memory of Katari was perceived as rooted and constitutive of the social actors who were claiming it. The everyday approach can complement the presentist one: the connection between Katari and the social struggle was given not only by certain political topics, such as indigenous government, but also by the way actors occupied and interacted with each other within a particular spatial setting, which allowed this memory to be projected and reinforced in daily life. This approach will also be applied in the other memory cases, such as the War of the Pacific and colonial Potosí since it casts light on spatial and daily dimensions that enable their reproduction and rooting even during periods without an explicit social struggle.

Duty to remember and the politics of memory

In the previous section, we mainly discussed a branch of theories of collective memory that deals specifically with its epistemological implications and how to understand memory's reproduction through time. However, a new strand of literature on social memory has emerged in cultural studies, offering an approach different from these social science concerns. Instead of focusing on the temporalities of collective memory, how past narratives are and can be reproduced in the present, these contributions focus on memory's privileged relationship with traumatic events. Thus, this approach identifies memory as a key issue of contemporary cultural and political debate, stemming from the ethical requirements of remembering Holocaust and Nazi atrocities.

These studies flourished during the 1980s and 1990s, surrounding many commemoration events in the United States and Europe, such as the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (1993), and the fiftieth anniversaries of the Nazi rise to power (1983) and the end of Second World War (1995) (Huyssen, 2003, pp. 12–13). The fact that many of the Holocaust survivors were dying by this period also fostered some anxiety regarding whether their memory would be kept by the following generations (Landsberg, 2004, p. 112). The events thus marked a break in which collective or social memories were perceived by contemporary societies. Instead of mobilizing heroic narratives of the past to construct national cohesion, collective remembering now meant that a society had to face “responsibility for its past” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 94), “‘learning the lessons’ of history” (Olick, 2007, p. 122). “Never again”, an expression so important in the politics of remembering the Holocaust and, later, the Latin American dictatorships, became a major motto of this understanding of memory.²⁶

Memory as trauma

Many of the concepts emerging from this cultural studies literature incorporate trauma as a key category. For instance, Marianne Hirsch defines “post-memory” as “a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience” (2012, p. 6). Her paradigmatic case is the memory of the generations born after the Nazi Holocaust, who remember the traumatic events lived by their parents “by means of stories, images, and

²⁶ The first report on human rights violations of the Argentinian dictatorship was called “Nunca más” (never again), a fact noted by Huyssen as evidence for the transposition of the Holocaust discourse to other contexts (2003, p. 99). Besides the Argentinian case, reports on human rights violations were also called “never again” in Brazil and in Uruguay (Marchesi, 2001).

behaviours among which they grew up” (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5). Another influential concept, “prosthetic memory” was employed by Alison Landsberg to define memories that are incorporated by spectators through media experiences of a traumatic event: “they are not the product of lived experience, but are derived from engagement with a mediated representation, such as a film or an experiential museum, and like an artificial limb, they are actually worn on the body” (Landsberg, 2004, p. 222).

Studying the memory of selected events, this literature explores primarily literary texts, public monuments, museums, works of art and movies. Although the memory of the Holocaust is a main reference for these authors, they also include the analysis of representations related to other traumatic events, such as slavery in the United States (Hirsch, 2012; Landsberg, 2004), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Hirsch, 2012), European colonialism and the Algerian Independence War (Rothberg, 2000), the AIDS epidemic and the Vietnam War in the United States (Sturken, 1997), the destruction of German cities (Huyssen, 2003), and the Argentinian military dictatorship (Huyssen, 2003; Jelin, 2003). The objects and places of memory, or “technologies of memory” as defined by Sturken (1997, p. 9), are expected to entail a “healing” quality, allowing a psychoanalytical process of “working through” a collective trauma (Hirsch, 2012, p. 84).

The central focus on trauma, though, was not consensual among scholars of memory in cultural studies. Without denying the reality of traumatic events, many authors were more worried about the public dimension of the discussion around these events and found the traditional psychoanalytical approach limited. Marita Sturken (1997), for example, noted that the personal experience of a traumatic event and its process of healing contrasted with the way the national society (in her case, the US) used the same places and objects of memory to recreate old national mythologies or to promote collective forgetting. Michael Rothberg proposed an idea of “counterpublic testimony”, in contrast to the psychoanalytic dialogue, to discuss the work of politically engaged intellectuals (Rothberg, 2009, p. 202).

Andreas Huyssen calls our attention to the danger of collapsing memory into trauma, which “would unduly confine our understanding of memory, marking it too exclusively in terms of pain, suffering, and loss”, a “prison house of the past”. This approach, he argues, would “deny human agency”, locking us into “compulsive repetition” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 8). In a more radical criticism, Wulf Kansteiner argues that the concept of trauma is inadequate to understand collective memories, since contemporary social and political conflicts, and the political interests and opportunities they entail, are more important than the “persistence of the trauma” to determine whether a memory will become successful:

The concept of trauma, as well as the concept of repression, neither captures nor illuminates the forces that contribute to the making and unmaking of collective memories. Even in cases of so-called delayed collective memory (as in the case of the Holocaust or Vietnam), the delayed onset of public debates about the meaning of negative pasts has more to do with political interest and opportunities than the persistence of trauma or with any “leakage” in the collective unconscious (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 187).

We can note here that the perception of collective memory as trauma holds many similarities with the idea of a collective unconscious discussed previously. For instance, the latent memory of indigenous resistance could also be thought of as a long-standing trauma resulting from Spanish colonisation. The criticisms made while analysing the collective unconscious can also be applied to trauma: both concepts limit human agency, turning the memory of the past as something “obligatory”, which cannot be controlled by contemporary subjects; they tend to bend too far the psychoanalytical measuring stick by individualising collective processes, risking misrepresenting them altogether; and, finally, they are very difficult to be identified in the material world, since by definition they stop being a trauma or an unconscious when they are verbalised and claimed as meaningful experiences.²⁷

Memory as a guide for the future

Paradoxically, many of the authors that focus their study of memory on traumatic events place much emphasis on the political sphere. Despite sometimes essentialising social traumas, which limits the imagination of political projects beyond loss and suffering, this literature also shows a strong normative political and ethical dimension by identifying an obligation to never repeat these events of violence. For instance, Hirsch identifies as a major task of her work the investigation of “how memory studies, and the work of postmemory, might constitute a platform of activist and interventionist cultural and political engagement, a form of repair and redress, inspired by feminism and other movements for social change” (2012, p. 6). Andreas Huyssen moves away from the trauma paradigm and defends a broader strategy to deal with a traumatic past, such as human rights discourse: “(...) the transnational discourse of human rights may give us a better handle on such matters than the transfer of psychoanalysis into the world of politics and history” (Huyssen, 2003, p. 9). Michael Rothberg uses his concept of multidirectional memory, which will be explored below, to emphasise how memory spurs “unexpected acts of empathy and solidarity”, offering “grounds on which people can construct and act upon visions of justice” (2009, p. 19). Thus, memory is often seen as a tool to foster a

²⁷ See, for example, the formulation of Cathy Caruth of trauma as an “unclaimed experience” (1996).

higher ethical commitment not only among a population that suffered from a particular violence but among humanity as a whole.

However, the focus on cultural objects and places presents a limitation for these authors to study the politics of memory in terms of the agency of actors. In this sense, the work of Elizabeth Jelin (2003) is very helpful since she theorises social memory against the backdrop of the military dictatorships of the Southern Cone in Latin America, paying close attention to the role of activists in promoting the memory of state repression and demanding justice and reparation. Inspired by Tzvetan Todorov, Jelin defends the fostering of “exemplary memories”, in which the recollection “turns into an example that leads to the possibility of learning something from it, and the past develops into a guide for action in the present and in the future” (2003, p. 35). The exemplary memories are defined against “literal memories”, which would depict a unique and “not transferable” past, which, in turn, “does not lead anywhere beyond itself” (Jelin, 2003, p. 35). The movement between literal and exemplary memories is conceived as a movement between individual and public memories, and Jelin identifies particular actors as very important to this process: the “memory entrepreneurs”. These agents are normally intellectuals, activists, or directly involved individuals – in the Latin American case, the victims of state terror or the military – “who seek social recognition and political legitimacy of *one* (their own) interpretation or narrative of the past” (Jelin, 2003, pp. 33–34). They foster exemplary memories because their success in the struggles for memory depends on the “widening of scales and scopes” and “on their capacity to create new projects and open new spaces”, rather than the “mechanical reproduction” of the literal memories (Jelin, 2003, p. 35).

With its intellectual inspiration in Howard Becker’s “moral entrepreneurs”, the memory entrepreneurs seek to consolidate their interpretation of the past as a consensus among society.²⁸ Thus, one could conclude, when consensus is reached, the role of memory entrepreneurs stops being so important. In this research, the activists interviewed were not memory entrepreneurs, since they claimed memories that were already well-established among Bolivians. Rather, the label of memory entrepreneurs fits in better with actors that appeared before: the indianist intellectual Fausto Reinaga and the Kataristas for the promotion of the memory of Tupac Katari, the politician José Vicente Uchoa for the establishment of Eduardo Avaroa as a symbol of Bolivian heroic resistance during the War of the Pacific, the eighteenth century chronicler Bartolomé de Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela for the register of Potosí’s grandiose history.

²⁸ See Jelin’s discussion of of Becker (2003, p. 33).

Once the interpretation of the past promoted by these actors starts being a pervasive narrative, it can be used in other contexts, for other social struggles. An example of this phenomenon is the Holocaust, which became an almost obligatory reference to conceptualise many social catastrophes (genocides, mass murders, tortures, and state terrorism) in the rest of the world. Huyssen noted that in the discussion of violence under the Argentinian military dictatorship, the Holocaust discourse appeared as a “productive inscription”, which recovered “certain tropes and images, ethical and political evaluations”, rather than contributing for a raw comparison between Argentina and Germany in these particular historical moments. He argues that the Holocaust comprises an “international prism” that assists local discourses in legal and commemorative dimensions (Huyssen, 2003, p. 98). This exchangeable characteristic of certain narratives of the past was the main focus of Rothberg’s concept of “multidirectional memory”, in which it is argued that memory should be conceived as “subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative”. Understanding memory as multidirectional counteracts the common perception of a “competitive memory”, in which references to events of the past would compete with each other. For instance, instead of perceiving the memory of the Holocaust as an impediment to the memory of slavery and colonialism in the United States, Rothberg suggests it would be better understood as “a platform to articulate a vision of American racism past and present” (2009, p. 3).

The idea of memory as a prism or platform that helps to articulate the narrative of other events, be they old or new ones, is closely related to the literature on social movements discussed previously: Poletta’s focus on how familiar metaphors such as healing and being born assisted fledgling movements (2006), and Selbin’s emphasis on the role of popular versions of national and local history in social revolutions (2008). Also, understanding memory of past events as a platform helps us to conceptualise how the past is transformed into an important tool to understand the present, as we have discussed with the “presentist approach”. Old tropes related to these past events, such as how Chile had stolen Bolivian development by occupying the provinces of the seacoast, can be applied to new situations, in which Bolivian development is also stolen by a greedy foreign power. It is not only that memory counts on frameworks to be expressed but also that memory itself provides these frameworks of interpretation.

Because it contains a transnational and a temporal dimension, the idea of memory as a platform for new narratives opens up a path beyond the formulations of social movements’ theory. On the one hand, it states clearly that certain narratives of the past can cross national borders, and, on the other (and most importantly for this work), it emphasises the importance of the historical development of the stories being told during a struggle, since being a platform to express other memories implies a previous process of consensus-building. Thus, this literature

is also strongly related to the processual approach to memory (Jansen, 2007; Olick, 1999; Schwartz, 1982) identified in the previous section. Because we also adopt the processual approach, we only partially follow Rothberg and thus do not consider memories “multidirectional”. The main problem with his conceptualisation is that multidirectionality suggests that events and their interpretations are merely “tangled”, to use Sturken’s expression (1997), going back and forth in time and in space. While this interpretation makes sense when we study cultural works and how authors combine topics, when we deal with social formations, the analysis of the process of how some ideas became consensual and which came first actually matters.

Understanding memory as a platform for social struggle also provides us with a privileged tool to study the politics of memory and its reception among social actors in particular, a subject known to be insufficiently researched. While discussing new developments in memory studies, Pieter Vermeulen indicates a lack of investigation into how the representation of memories impacts politics: “We all somehow know that there is no one-on-one correspondence between particular artistic choices and laudable political outcomes” (Vermeulen et al., 2012, p. 231). The root of the problem lies in the transition between the poetics of memory and the politics of memory, which still remained, according to him, a “wager”. We do not know for sure whether Rothberg’s “multidirectional memory” (2009) is able to bring beneficial effects and more ethical political relations as is often claimed, and this argument could also be extended to the idea of Landsberg “prosthetic memory” (2004) or Hirsch’s “post-memory” (2012). In fact, Vermeulen voiced concerns already raised by Kansteiner, who emphasised the need to go beyond cultural artefacts and to “tie these representations to specific social groups and their understanding of the past”, which would entail “knowledge about reception processes” (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 192). In that regard, this study is able to make a particular contribution, since it applies an inverted methodology: it starts its investigation with the social struggle, the moment of political action, so it can analyse the politics of memory involved in the process. After overcoming the “wager” status of the politics of memory by this inversion, we can then identify the events of the past that were judged central for the political actors to explain their own struggle.

Organisation of the thesis

Two different paths have been taken in this chapter. The first covered the most important academic discussions of contemporary social mobilisations in Bolivia and the relationship of its society with social memory and the past. The second presented a number of theoretical

contributions, which together form a theoretical pathway to study struggle and memory. The identification of this pathway is necessary because the main shortcomings of the Bolivian literature relate to the lack of a systematic approach to memory, a perspective that could explain the strength and endurance of certain narratives of the past without appealing to the idea of an unconscious collective memory or to an automatic transposition of important events to the category of necessarily important social memories. Also, the review of these multiple theories on social movements and collective memory allowed us to identify a particular contribution of this study to both fields: a temporal approach to the role of narratives in collective action, and a more comprehensive and detailed research of the politics of memory and its reception among social actors.

This thesis is divided into three parts, each covering one of the regions studied: Omasuyos, El Alto and Potosí. The first chapter of each part is dedicated to explaining the struggles that occurred in the locality, the main economic context of the actors, a brief historical account of their relationship with the state, a characterisation of the main identities that were used to understand the actors' position in the Bolivian society and, finally, a contextualised interpretation of the political projects defended during the struggle. These chapters employ concepts highlighted in the section on contentious politics and correspond to a more "traditional" approach to the struggles. The second chapter of each part, however, is entirely dedicated to narratives of the past that appeared during these mobilisations, namely: the rebellion of Tupac Katari, the War of the Pacific and colonial Potosí. Accordingly, these chapters first identify the multiple topics through which these social memories relate to the current mobilisation (their role as platforms for new struggles), how the actors came to know about these past events, how the memory of them through time was reproduced, and how these memories can be related to the actors' everyday lives.

Methodological notes

One of the main concerns of this research was to overcome the conjectural status of the politics of memory that many social memory studies presented. Thus, we applied an inverted methodology, which started with the selection of moments of social mobilisation and then identified the references to the past, the social memories, which were relevant for the activists to explain their struggle. The research process was very inductive since none of the "memory

cases” – Tupac Katari, War of the Pacific and colonial Potosí – was defined before the data analysis, which happened only after the fieldwork finished.

The empirical material of this study was gathered during 14 months of fieldwork in Bolivia, conducted between 2012 and 2013. The majority of the data comes from interviews with mainly grassroots leaders, complemented by participant observation and archive research. The first step was to choose the areas and the respective social struggles that would be the point of departure of the investigation. The idea of studying memory during September and October 2003 in Omasuyos and El Alto was already clear when I arrived in Bolivia but I still had doubts about the third case. Following the advice of James Dunkerley, my supervisor, I considered researching Potosí, a region not normally included in comparative studies but with the potential to illuminate national dynamics from the vantage point of an unusual periphery. At first, I was planning to limit my research to the period between 2000 and 2005, before the government of Evo Morales, but *potosinos* had a different relationship with this period. They supported the national struggle in 2003 and in 2005 with marches and declarations but there was very little sense of protagonism, since they recognised the department of La Paz as its main arena. Compared to the depth and the engagement demonstrated by activists of Omasuyos and El Alto regarding 2003, *potosinos*’ experience during this period was much more shallow. Thus, I realised how important it was to focus on a struggle that people remembered in detail and that would awake their passion. This was how the study of 2010 in Potosí was selected, since people jumped to this topic automatically when talking about any sort of mobilisation.

I adopted La Paz as my working base and travelled daily to El Alto or Omasuyos to participate in events and interview people. When I was researching Potosí, though, I travelled from La Paz and used to spend at least a week in the city. The first months of research were spent in initial investigations in the areas to be studied, doing preliminary interviews and newspaper archive research. During this period, for example, I was able to adjust my focus on Potosí. Then, I started interviewing, dedicating around two to three months to each region. I first conducted interviews in El Alto, then in Omasuyos and finally in Potosí. Some research was also conducted in Coroma, an indigenous district in the department of Potosí that played an important role in starting the mobilisation in 2010. Unfortunately, because of the tight timetable of the writing process, I was unable to include the case here.

Seventy activists were interviewed from the four regions, 20 from El Alto, 24 from Omasuyos, 16 from Potosí, and 10 from Coroma (see Table 1). Most of the interviewees were men, which reflected the predominantly masculine environment of Bolivian social organisations. In the case of Omasuyos, because of the presence of female peasant unions in local, departmental and national level (Bartolinas), it was easier to interview women activists

compared to other regions. In El Alto, I tried to counterbalance the disproportionate male interviewees with a secondary source, which focused on women who had been activists during the October 2003 events (see Hylton *et al*, 2005). Unfortunately, I was unable to interview more women or to find such sources in the case of Potosí.

Table 1 - Activists interviewed according to their gender and area

	Women	Men	Total
El Alto	3	17	20
Omasuyos	7	17	24
Potosí	1	15	16
Coroma	3	7	10
Total	14	56	70

Because the focus of this research was to investigate how social memories were expressed in moments of struggle, it was important to limit the interviews to activists. The main selection criterion was that they had participated in the mobilisations studied; they did not need to have had been members of any organisation. Thus, most of them were grassroots activists and were not active in national-scale movements. There were few exceptions: Rogelio Mayta, the lawyer of the families of the victims of state violence in October 2003; Felipe Imaña, a researcher of the FOCAPACI NGO in El Alto; Felix Tancara, representative of the federation of the Chaco War veterans; Felipa Huanca, a leader of the female national peasant union (Bartolinas), who was nominated as the MAS candidate for the government of La Paz department in 2015; Felipe Quispe, a known Indianist activist and the executive secretary of CSUTCB in 2003; and René Navarro, a former member of the civic movement in Potosí who was also a MAS constituent deputy in 2006 and 2007. Most of these interviews were conducted at the beginning of the fieldwork, when the research strategy was still unclear and a broader set of actors were interviewed. However, both Felipe Quispe and Felipa Huanca were important actors during the mobilisation in Omasuyos in 2003 and were able to provide key information for this research.

The wide scale of the localities researched made it difficult to negotiate a collective consent to the study, but the heads of the principle organisations were mostly the first people to be interviewed. In Achacachi, because the provincial federation was in a process of reorganisation and elections, I started the interviews with the mayor; in El Alto, with FEJUVE's president; and in Potosí, with COMCIPO's president. However, other contacts were also gathered through activists I already knew from previous research, or through the recommendations of other researchers. Thus, snowballing was the main strategy to contact people. All interviewees were presented with a consent form in Spanish, which was read and

explained to them. At the end of the form, they were asked to choose between being anonymous and being named sources. The majority of them (80%, 56 in 70 interviewees) chose to be named, which is understandable because they were very proud of the mobilisations and wanted to be mentioned as part of this history.

The great majority of the interviews were individual, but at least three interviews were conducted in groups, all with activists from Omasuyos. When it was possible, people that were interviewed in groups were interviewed again individually. Most interviews lasted between half an hour and two hours. In keeping with a semi-structured approach, I used a template with the main topics to be covered but considerable improvisation happened depending on the unfolding of the conversation. Mainly, I asked about the actors' motivations, who were the main protagonists and against whom they were struggling. No questions about particular memories were posed at first but once the interviewees had cited past events to explain the mobilisation, I normally asked follow-up questions.

Selection of cases

After the fieldwork, I was able to analyse the interview data with a content analysis software (NVivo) and make an informed decision about the "memory topics" to be analysed in the dissertation. Table 2 presents the number of activists from each region that cited certain past references in their interviews. In the case of El Alto, 12 out of 22 activists (54,5%) talked about the War of the Pacific; in Omasuyos, 16 out of 24 (66%) made reference to Tupac Katari or Bartolina Sisa; and in Potosí, 12 out of 16 (75%) mentioned the city's colonial past. Even though these memories were the most cited in the areas of research, the numbers alone were not sufficient to choose them from among others. A close analysis of the interviews also showed that there was enough material surrounding these references that would enable me to relate them to the struggles and to the activists' daily lives.

Table 2 - Number of interviewees citing different past events in each area of study

	El Alto	Omasuyos	Potosí	Total
<i>Total number of activists interviewed</i>	20	24	16	60
Potosí's colonial past	1	0	12	13
Tupac Katari Rebellion (1781)*	2	16	0	18
War of the Pacific (1879)**	12	7	3	22
Federal War - Zárate Villca (1898-1999)***	1	3	1	5
Chaco War (1932-1935)	2	8	2	12
1952 revolution and agrarian reform (1953)****	7	13	3	23

Military dictatorship (1960s-1980s)	5	9	4	18
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*Coding counted every person that mentioned Tupac Katari or Bartolina Sisa, with the exception of organisation names.

**Coding counted every person that mentioned the war itself or the idea that Chile was an enemy nation because of the lost seacoast.

***Coding counted every person that mentioned Zárate Villca or the war itself.

****Coding counted every person that mentioned the 1952 revolution, the 1953 agrarian reform, universal suffrage, nationalisation of the mines, the MNR militias, or the oppression of *patrones*.

What about the events that did not appear as frequently in the activists' narratives? An interesting case is the 1952 revolution and changes associated with it, particularly the agrarian reform and universal suffrage. If we consider all the interviews together, independently of the area, this event appeared more than any other among the interviewees' narratives. It was the second most important memory among *alteños* and Omasuyos' activists. A close analysis of the interviews, however, showed a multiplication of meanings. Most Aymara peasant activists in Omasuyos refer to the revolution to talk about a period in which the communities rebelled against the oppression of the *patrones* (landowners): "Around '52 (...) this [struggle] happened because of land, because of slavery, (...) because the land belongs to Aymara people, not to landowners".²⁹ On the other hand, some activists in other areas referred to the revolution as the defeat of the so-called "tin barons" [*barones del estaño*] and the triumph of the MNR and the miners: "If we had a party leading all this movement, something like the 1952 revolution would have happened, when the tin barons were defeated (...). By then, not even Victor Paz Estenssoro was leading, but Hernán Siles, Juan Lechín Oquendo (...). It was a revolution to take the power",³⁰ "The miners are not afraid of anything. (...) They make history. (...) The 1952 revolution happened thanks to the miners".³¹ This multiplicity of meanings makes it difficult to understand the 1952 revolution as a closed event, which can be captured in a stable narrative, with defined protagonists and outcomes. This lack of consensual narrative regarding the

²⁹ Anonymous 3, interview on 3 July 2013. Similar statements were given by other leaders: "The agrarian reform started to remove the *patrones* in Achacachi, then [it spread] to another provinces and departments" (Constancio Gutiérrez, interview on 20 June 2013); "The *patrón* used to live there, (...) my father and my mother used to work for him. They didn't let women study, they were afraid. (...) There were many cases of sexual abuse, that's why they were afraid (...). This was when I was young, this time" (Vicenta Mamani, 27 June 2013); "Wila Sacu [an important leader of the period] has been four years in prison (...) to remove the *patrones*" (Eusebio Quito, interview on 28 June 2013); "In Warisata, when the school was founded in 1931, there were only *patrones*, who had the military, everything, at their disposal. (...) But Omasuyos united, and when this happens, we achieve our goals" (Eloy Captcha, interview on 3 July 2013). "Before there were *patrones* here in Warisata, who have abused us. We had to work for them" (Anonymous 5, interview on 4 July 2013).

³⁰ Luis Barrerra, activist from El Alto, interview on 20 May 2013.

³¹ Anonymous 13, from Potosí, interview on 6 November 2013.

revolution is a plausible explanation of why its memory did not become a major platform for the expression of new social struggles in any of the areas studied.

The same can be argued in the discussion of the period of military dictatorships between the 1960s and early 1980s,³² in which urban sectors in Potosí, for example, emphasised the miner resistance, and Aymara peasant sectors in Omasuyos focused on their own process of reorganisation to overcome the Military-Peasant Pact.³³ ³⁴ Even though the memory of the dictatorships was indeed a constant reference for the activists' depiction of state violence, because it was mainly related to a resistance process, it was unable to express broader political expectations, such as an indigenous government and the recovery of natural resources.

The Chaco War represents another interesting case since it is often claimed as a major event in the formation of Bolivian national identity, as seen earlier in our discussion of Zavaleta Mercado. Besides, because the mobilisation in October 2003 later became known as the "Gas War", it was also expected that people in El Alto would talk more about the war fought in the 1930s between Bolivia and Paraguay for a region rich in hydrocarbons. However, only two people in El Alto mentioned this war, one of them was Felix Tancara, son of a Chaco War veteran and representative of their federation. Differently from the 1952 revolution, this war has a standard narrative that pervades popular imaginary: a war fought between two peoples against their interests, provoked by greedy international interests and by irresponsible elites.³⁵ This

³² In 1964, MNR president Víctor Paz Estenssoro was removed from office by a *coup d'état* from his vice-president, General René Barrientos Ortuño. Barrientos' regime lasted until his death in 1969 and was succeeded by short administrations of left-wing military leaders, Alfredo Ovando (1969-1970) and Juan José Torres (1970-1971). In 1971, the conservative forces in the army overthrew Torres, opening the path to a seven-year dictatorship of General Hugo Bánzer. The period between 1978 and 1982 was one of the most unstable of Bolivia's political life. While sectors of the army and the civil society struggled to re-establish democracy, a series of military coups took place, including the 16-day administration of Alberto Natusch (1979) and the bloody regime of Luis García Meza (1980-1981).

³³ The Military-Peasant Pact was established by the dictatorship of Barrientos. The general was popular among the peasantry, particularly in the Cochabamba valleys. The pact was kept during the subsequent military governments and was only "broken" after the "Tolata Massacre" in 1974, during the dictatorship of Bánzer.

³⁴ See, for example, the following testimonies, the first from a former peasant leader and the second from an activist and social researcher in Potosí: "These [leaders] were from the military (...). They created the nationalist federation, which symbolised the Military-Peasant Pact. We didn't recognise them. So, to attack them, to disappear with the Military-Peasant Pact, three federations were united: the independent federation, Tupac Katari and Julián Apaza" (Anonymous 2, interview on 28 June 2013); "During the resistance, when there was the hunger strike of miner women against Bánzer, the miner women in Potosí started their strike in this parish" (Vladimir Cruz, interview on 13 September 2013).

³⁵ Augusto Céspedes' work is a good example of this standard narrative. Céspedes was a journalist covering the war in the Chaco and wrote a series of stories during the conflict, later published under the title of *Crónicas heroicas de una guerra estúpida* (Heroic chronicles of a stupid war). His most famous work on the Chaco is *Sangre de Mestizos* (Blood of Mestizos), which depicts the soldiers' desperate search for water; the elite young man who profits from the war business, but effectively avoids conscription; the officer who sees himself executing a "plan of carnage typical of a German general, under the tropical sun"

narrative could have been easily transferred to contemporary struggles, particularly to El Alto, since it depicts multinational companies and a non-representative government, which did not follow the national interests. Why did it not happen? Why was the Chaco War mainly absent in the Gas War narratives? Perhaps one key to understanding this absence is the perplexity that the standard narrative of the Chaco War causes among people: the meaningless death of thousands of conscripts. At least in the case of the War of the Pacific, there is still a lost seacoast, a maritime demand that justifies the hero status of Bolivians fighting the war. It does not mean that this perplexity causes the collective forgetting of the Chaco War, perhaps quite the contrary. A fascinating study, but very challenging in empirical terms, would be to analyse how the memory of the Chaco haunts the Bolivian contemporary imagination. In any case, in the context of collective action, the Chaco memory probably fails to present a narrative able to bring projections of future, to become a platform for action.

The Federal War and the army of Zárate Willka were surprisingly the past events that were less remembered by the activists.³⁶ On one hand, it is puzzling that only one interviewee in Potosí mentioned the war since one of the main demands of the 2010 mobilisation was to have a federal department. Instead, activists vaguely remembered the regionalist administration of a former mayor in 1940s as a source of political inspiration to their federalism. On the other hand, Zárate Willka, an indigenous leader who led an army of thousands of men and joined the liberal forces against the conservative forces, was only rarely remembered as an example to contemporary indigenous struggle in Omasuyos. Again, these memories might be more difficult to bring up because of the diversity of interpretations around them. The war still inspires antagonist regionalist feelings between the cities of Sucre and La Paz, which fought for being Bolivia's capital during the war.³⁷ Because of its geographical proximity, Potosí has historically supported Sucre, which was aligned with conservative forces and against the federal petition of the liberals during the war, making it more difficult to trace their contemporary federal demand to the Federal War. Regarding the army of Zárate Willka, there is also plenty of scholarly discussion around whether they were fighting for an indigenous cause, a "race war",

(Céspedes, 2000, p. 84). His writings brought a vivid depiction of the war experience, which was later incorporated into the nationalist rhetoric of the MNR.

³⁶ The Federal War (1898-1899) was fought between conservatives based in Sucre and liberals based in La Paz, the former linked to the silver elites and the latter to the new flourishing tin elites. Initially, the liberals demanded a federalisation of Bolivia against the centralised policies of the conservatives in Sucre. However, after their victory in the war, the liberals put aside the federal project and turned La Paz into a permanent seat of the government.

³⁷ For instance, during the constitutional assembly in 2007, one of the major issues that arose was the local demand of *sucreños* to regain their full capital status (*capitalía plena*), which was answered with massive mobilisations in El Alto and La Paz.

or for a national project of Bolivia, sincerely supporting the cause of the liberals and being betrayed by them (Hylton, 2010, pp. 10–13).

While discussing the memories of the events above, which were not considered as central as the memories of Tupac Katari, the War of the Pacific and colonial Potosí in this research, several issues arise. First, they are not necessarily forgotten memories; most of them are very present in people's daily life and even in their perception of Bolivian politics. Even though they did not present an appropriate narrative for the struggles being analysed here, this does not imply that they cannot be mobilised in other political contexts or that they are absent from popular imagination. There might be a more structural reason explaining why they were not easily mobilised: all of the events occurred in a more recent period. Time helps to organise and simplify narratives of events, allowing for the selection of contents that are going to be remembered and contents that are going to be forgotten. A central feature of collective memories is their narrative character, its ability to transform confusing life experiences into cohesive wholes. Thus, the multiplicity of ideas that the memories of these events normally bring about might be a consequence of their "younger" existence, which undermines their ability to create clear-cut messages that can be mobilised during social struggles.

This temporal effect is much clearer when we compare the exemplary memory of distant past events with the recent memory of the struggles themselves. Because the interviews were focused on struggles that happened ten (Omasuyos and El Alto) or three years earlier (Potosí), there were two main layers of recollection: a narrative of the days of the mobilisation, what happened and how; and references to past experiences that served as explanatory models. All the cases presented a sort of transposition of situations: "what happened now (recent past) follows the same pattern of what happened then (decades or centuries ago)". Both these levels can be understood through the lenses of collective memories. When talking about recent struggles, even though they presented much more variation, people tended to focus on the same events and dates: the marches with more than 100,000 people in Potosí; the elders that appeared on television saying they were willing to sacrifice their lives during the hunger strike to give something to their department; the bloody Sunday in El Alto, when the army opened fire in the northern districts; the gatherings in Q'alachaka in Achacachi and the confrontation with the army in Warisata, in Omasuyos. These were key moments of the struggle that were perhaps judged as important over the next days or weeks, while people were exchanging their perceptions about what they lived or incorporating media reports to their own stories. Following Halbwachs, these "more immediate" memories are not only individual recallings and have a defining relationship with the larger group people are immersed in. However, their textures are very different from the memories related to the more distant events. Regarding a situation that

they actually lived, people can tell stories with detail and attach different meanings to the same events; there is much more diversity. In respect to the events that happened in the distant past, on the other hand, meanings are more uniform; they lack the texture of the direct experience. Therefore, there was a need to establish a methodological distinction between these levels, in which the “social memory” dimension of the first was left aside and not directly tackled.

Transferability, triangulation and writing strategy

While discussing the methodology of this research, it is impossible to avoid the question of how representative the actors interviewed – and their respective memories – are of the communities they live and the Bolivian society as a whole. To answer this question, we have to go back to the objective of this study again: to understand the role collective memories play during moments of social struggle. Thus, enhancing the comprehension of social actors in Bolivia, Omasuyos, El Alto and Potosí are secondary outcomes of this major investigation interest. The actors interviewed are not seen in this research as representative of their major geographical collectivities, but are seen instead as representative of a broader category of social activists. Therefore, the way they recover stories from the past and apply them to their political demands might have more in common with the practice of activists in other parts of the world, than with their neighbours who decide not to get involved in any social mobilisation.

As the thesis unfolds, the reader will come upon many references to larger collectivities, such as the history and the economic situation of the areas studied, social identities perceived among the local population as a whole, features of daily life experienced in these areas, and how memory topics developed through history within local and national societies. These references are used not to extend the validity of our assertions on Bolivian or local societies, but to provide key contextual information both to the unfolding of these narratives and of the activists’ social and political lives. Activists and narratives do not emerge *ex-nihilo*, they are rooted in particular places and groups.

What is being argued here can be exemplified by the memory of the Tupac Katari rebellion. Although many ethnographic studies in rural communities in the highlands did not identify this memory among local historical conscience,³⁸ this memory is enormously significant among Aymara peasant activists. It would have been interesting to investigate how non-activists of Omasuyos’ rural communities dealt with the memory of Katari, but the relationship between activists’ and non-activists’ memories was beyond the scope of this research.

³⁸ See, for example, the work of Abercrombie (1998), Canessa (2012b) and Harris (2000).

This discussion leads us to the traditional question of the generalisability of the study. If there is no generalisability claim to Bolivia or to the regions studied, how can the knowledge produced be useful in any sense? It might be valuable for people studying Bolivia or for people studying the interaction between memory and struggle, but the burden of looking for similarities that would allow such use lies beyond this research. Here, we follow Lincoln and Guba's concept of "transferability":

It should be clear from the above that if there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make the application elsewhere. The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. The best advice to give anyone seeking to make a transfer is to accumulate empirical evidence about contextual similarity; the responsibility of the original investigator ends in providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 298)

Another issue that should be tackled directly is the methods adopted by this research and the sort of knowledge they allow. The methodology combined three typical qualitative research tools: interview, participant observation and archival research. Interviews were considered the main source of empirical data while the other two methods provided contextual information on the actors and their struggles. Archival research was carried out on newspapers published during the periods of the mobilisations: September and October 2003 and July and August 2010. They were particularly useful in the case of Potosí, which was the subject of very few studies and chronologies of the mobilisation. This research provided dates and standardised data, since sometimes the references given in the interviews varied considerably. The participant observation was carried out in moments of public gatherings, such as civic parades, religious rites, demonstrations, assemblies, workshops and official ceremonies. Particularly important here were the commemorative celebrations, held either by the state or by social organisations. They expressed willingness for memorialisation and a relative social consensus as to the main topics of national, regional or local memories. For instance, in Omasuyos, there was a reasonable consensus among Aymara peasant activists that Q'alachaqa and Tupac Katari were important references for future generations.

This "triangulation" methodology was not used to increase the validity of the findings, to test the content found through one method against the content found through another. The different methods actually complement each other, increasing the "depth" and the "consistency" of the findings and the methodological procedures, so that they further a grounding that "systematically extend[s] and complete[s] the possibilities of knowledge production", rather than simply assesses results (Flick, 2009, p. 445).

Despite the gathering of a considerable amount of interview data, the dissertation also relies heavily on secondary sources, because the theoretical pathway chosen required information beyond the fieldwork: literature works, data on schooling and textbooks, historical monographs, census datasets, and ethnographies of specific groups that could be related to the ones studied here. This material was used to provide economic and historical background, to assist the identification of main social identities, to understand how memories were reproduced in the past, and to gather information on how they might be reproduced in the present in everyday life. The depiction of this extensive number of academic works also reflected a will to establish a dialogue with the literature that has been developed on Bolivia, by both local and international scholars.

This choice had an impact on the amount of fieldwork empirical material depicted in the thesis. The writing strategy privileged a more contextualised presentation of data, analysing them with the support of previous academic discussions, instead of a more descriptive approach. Besides, the interview structure encouraged activists to talk at length about the unfolding of the struggles, allowing the memory topics to flourish naturally in the conversation. A consequence of this is that a considerable amount of interview material is related to the struggles alone, a topic that has already received compelling scholarly attention (as discussed in the beginning of this chapter) and that was not the main focus of this research.

Positionality

Some final issues of positionality are worth mentioning. During the fieldwork, my research was received with a mixture of expectation and suspicion. Expectation because people felt a sense of relevance and responsibility regarding the national and international arena. It was very common, when people presented me to possible interviewees, that they would stress the importance of having their story publicised around the world. Suspicion because I was coming from another country and the purpose of the research and why I was there were not issues that were totally clear for many of them. The distrust was higher in the rural areas, and many regions had very good reason for it. Coroma, for example, has had many ritual textiles trafficked from

their *ayllus* in the 1980s.³⁹ Stories of *gringos* being accused of being *kharisiri*, an evil magical entity that steals human fat, are abundant in the ethnographic literature.

One would expect that Omasuyos would also be a difficult region in which to carry out research, given the region's fame as a rebellious area. Fortunately, during previous research in the area, Marxa Chávez and Patricia Costas, fellow researchers who studied the area, introduced me to the family of an esteemed former leader and he helped me a lot during the research process. In the town of Achacachi, the fact that I was Brazilian actually provoked many sympathies, since many young people from Omasuyos migrate to São Paulo to work in the textile industry for a couple of years.⁴⁰ During informal conversations in the town, people always asked me about football, tried out some words and expressions in Portuguese, and the young *casera* from whom I used to buy coffee in the mornings told me her son was called Neymar.

The interviews were all conducted in Spanish, and this represented a clear limitation in Omasuyos at least (even though knowing Aymara and Quechua would have been useful in Potosí and El Alto as well). I am aware that, had the interviews been conducted in Aymara, I would have been able to gather much richer details about the struggles and people's participation in them. Moreover, Spanish framed a particular view of the world for our conversations, in which the national politics was probably much more represented. The conversations in Spanish were only possible because I interviewed activists, who are normally more fluent in the language than others in their rural communities, and this was especially true for women. On the other hand, I felt that the fact that I was a woman created some bonds of confidence between me and the women I talked with, despite the language barriers.

Given the comparative approach of this research, I spent far less time investigating each area than I wished. In fact, moving to the next area to do fieldwork was a difficult process, which I only kept doing because I prioritised the schedule of the research. Sometimes, I regretted not doing a focused ethnography, which would have allowed me time to learn new languages and to settle in a totally different context. In any case, the resulting study would have been totally different.

³⁹ In 1992, 43 textiles were identified in the collection of a North American art trafficker and were returned to the *ayllus* of Coroma. More details in Bubba (1993).

⁴⁰ Because the working conditions of many Bolivians in the textile industry of São Paulo are considered to be analogous to slavery, as reported by NGOs and official labour inspections, I initially thought that being Brazilian was going to be a further complication.

PART I - OMASUYOS

The next two chapters are focused on the Aymara peasant movement in Omasuyos, a highland province on the east shore of Lake Titicaca, one of the four regions covered by this research. Chronologically, their mobilisation is the first of the cases to occur, during two periods of intense struggle, the Gas War in 2003 and the regional mobilisation in Potosí department. Omasuyos peasants started their mobilisation in September 2003 with a sectoral demand, but they fully embraced the more national slogans that appeared while the struggle was unfolding.

Chapter Two has a political and historiographical emphasis. Its objectives are: to describe a brief panorama of the unfolding of Omasuyos' struggle in 2003; to summarise the current situation of the peasant economy and the struggle for better prices for their products; to present their main political project and to analyse its historical relationship with the Bolivian state. Finally, a characterisation of the actors and their relationship with the Bolivian state and its power struggles will be offered.

Chapter Three focuses on how narrations of a distant event of the past – the struggle of Tupac Katari in late eighteenth century – served as platforms to express present themes and to make sense of the mobilisation. The Indian hero symbolised an array of experiences and expectations that had an impact on the political perceptions of the actors. Themes such as the indigenous government, martyrdom and the city's siege are depicted in vivid colour by evoking the memory of Katari. This chapter also discusses how this memory was learnt by the activists, how it was reproduced through time and how it relates to their everyday life.

In these chapters, the reader will find different uses of the categories of 'peasant', 'indigenous' and 'Indian'. 'Aymara peasant' is employed to categorise the population today in Omasuyos, since 'peasant' [*campesino*] is still a term widely used by them when talking about daily activities and Aymara is their main ethnic reference.⁴¹ 'Indigenous' is more often used by the actors to depict their political projects, such as indigenous president or government.⁴² 'Indian' was the term historically used by the colonial and the republican state to depict all the native population before the 1952 revolution, when the official nomenclature changed to 'peasant'. I keep the term here mainly to refer to historical episodes and actors.

⁴¹ In Achacachi, 95% self-identify as Aymara and in Ancoraimes, the province's second municipal section, this number is 94% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2005).

⁴² Canessa noted that a community leader from Khonkho used the Spanish term *indígena* when referring to Evo Morales, an 'indigenous president', in a speech in Aymara. "There is no word in Aymara for 'indigenous' because, naturally, it is not an indigenous concept" (Canessa, 2012a, p. 217). The Aymara term for self-definition is *jaqi*, which means 'people' (Canessa, 2012b, p. 5). However, since my conversations were all in Spanish, the term did not appear.

CHAPTER TWO – AYMARA REBELS

In September 2003, the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) promoted two marches from the highland provinces heading to the city of La Paz; one coming from Huarina and the other from Caracollo.⁴³ The protestors demanded the government's compliance to an agreement covering 70 topics, signed two years earlier in August 2001, and the liberation of Edwin Huampo, arrested in a communitarian justice execution case.⁴⁴

This was the third intense process of mobilisation that the Aymara peasant sector of La Paz highlands had promoted since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In September and October 2000, road blockades isolated the city of La Paz for two weeks and forced the government to negotiate with activists. On this occasion, the protests were of a national scale and coca growers and school teachers joined highland peasants in the mobilisation. In July 2001, the Aymara peasants were more isolated, which did not impede other sectors from offering their support and avoiding a violent clash between the army and the protestors (García Linera, Chávez León, & Cóstas Monje, 2008, p. 123-127).

Both in 2000 and 2001, the CSUTCB negotiated a broad agreement with the Bolivian government, which included a strong element of local development, welfare and agrarian reform: the donation of a thousand tractors; rural credit for small producers; a programme of rural development that would fund irrigation, road construction and technical support; social security policies for indigenous and peasant populations; new health centres; the expansion of electricity and telecommunication networks in rural areas; and the donation of 3.8 million of hectares of fiscal lands to peasant and indigenous communities.⁴⁵

In order to ensure compliance to this agreement, CSUTCB leaders also decided to promote a hunger strike at the headquarters of San Gabriel radio station in El Alto on 9 September 2003, besides the already mentioned marches to La Paz. The head of CSUTCB was by then Felipe Quispe, a left-wing Indianist leader from Omasuyos who was famous for his militancy in the Ejército Guerrillero Tupac Katari in the early 1990s (EGTK).⁴⁶ During the hunger strike,

⁴³ During this period, there were two branches of the CSUTCB: one directed by Felipe Quispe and another by Roman Loayza, supported by Evo Morales. Both of them had a significant national representation, but Quispe's branch was the one recognised by the COB and by the government (García Linera et al., 2008, p. 124-126).

⁴⁴ Edwin Huampo was a peasant leader from Los Andes province, in La Paz department, who was arrested because of the execution of two thieves in a communitarian justice case (García Linera et al., 2008, p. 128).

⁴⁵ Quispe's diary of the hunger strike presents a version of this agreement (Quispe Huanca, 2013, pp. 125–133).

⁴⁶ The EGTK, a small guerrilla movement, was known for attacks on power transmission towers and railway lines. Their leaders, including Felipe Quispe and Alvaro García Linera, the current Bolivian Vice-President,

Quispe kept a detailed diary. On 12 September, he stated that the entire mobilisation was directed towards forcing the government to respect their agreements, which only asked for a “life of dignity” for indigenous people:

Our struggle is in order to have a life of dignity [vida digna] in our communities. In our homes, we do not have electricity, internet, telephone, health centres or hospitals; we keep healing ourselves with natural herbs and human urine. There are no roads and, because of that, we cannot take the agricultural products to the big cities. We do not have drinking water; we keep drinking it from the rivers, which are the same or even worse than the dirty waters from Rio Abajo, in Murillo province. We do not have irrigation in the communities; the people who live from land cultivation have to look to the sky, day and night, waiting for the rain to come and freshen the Pachamama (or the crops). People did not know about the mechanization of the agriculture; we want agricultural machines in the *ayllus* and communities. (...) Some people even use human traction for the ploughing, they do not even have animals, which were lost because of the difficult and miserable circumstances we are living. Our way of life in the countryside is sad (Quispe Huanca, 2013, pp. 39–40).

The appeal for dignity of life and for the recognition of indigenous culture as presented in the 70-topic agreement seems to present a case in which a social movement tries to bargain their petition within the state and national society through sensitising public opinion with peaceful marches and hunger strikes. Within this perspective, nothing in the Aymara peasant movement would question the Bolivian state or even the government.

Someone not familiar with this movement would be surprised at the radicalism shown by the following lines in Quispe’s diary: “we are not happy with the white-*mestizo* government, they are our eternal enemies” (Quispe Huanca, 2013, p. 40). Since the first entries in the diary, dating from the beginning of September, Quispe mentions the need for a radical and violent struggle that would completely change “the imperialist and capitalist system” (Quispe Huanca, 2013, p. 21) and would regain the “power and the territory” for indigenous people, which had been lost since the “white-Spanish race” killed the Atahualpa, the last Inca ruler, in 1533 (Quispe Huanca, 2013, p. 28). Indeed, Quispe is famous for his idea of “Two Bolivias”, which reappears in his diary when he predicts that the struggle would become a “war between the *q’ara* Bolivia and the Indian Qullasuyo” (Quispe Huanca, 2013, p. 92).⁴⁷

were arrested in 1992, when the movement was broken-up. Quispe and other former EGTK militants were released in 1997, after five years in prison. In 1998, he was elected executive secretary of CSUTCB for the first time.

⁴⁷ The idea of “Two Bolivias” appeared before in the writings of the influential Indianist writer Fausto Reinaga: “In Bolivia there are two Bolivias. One Bolivia *mestiza* and European and another *kolla* [highland Indian people] and autochthonous. One Bolivia *chola* [*mestizo*, Indian that becomes European] and another Indian. Bolívar founded a republic with slaves, a republic with Indians” (Reinaga, 1969, p. 174). For a discussion on how the idea of the ‘two Bolivias’ has spread to other Bolivian social actors during a more recent period, see Dunkerley (2007) and Hylton and Thomson (2005, p. 50). The word *q’ara*, which means naked and antisocial, is normally used to depict white or *mestizo* city people and will be better

Even though they did not change the capitalist system in Bolivia, the mobilisation that started that September succeeded, a month later and with many other social sectors and demands involved, in overthrowing the Sánchez de Lozada government. Besides the marches and the hunger strike, the Aymara peasant sector of La Paz department increased the mobilisation with a more radical measure of pressure: road blockades.⁴⁸ Although the hunger strikers were weakening in El Alto and they had already agreed to negotiate with the government, the army violently unblocked the roads in Omasuyos and Larecaja province, killing five people on 20 September. The most violent episode occurred in Warisata, a town just ten kilometres from Achacachi, when the army killed an eight-year-old girl (Auza & Espinoza, 2004, pp. 30–31; García Linera et al., 2008, p. 129)

The so-called “Warisata massacre” had a major impact in radicalising the Aymara sector and in strengthening the mobilisation of El Alto’s inhabitants. The day before, 19 September, was a national day of protest against natural gas export through Chilean ports. The protest brought together many important national social and political actors, such as the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB) and Evo Morales’s party, the Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). The COB had already started its own agenda of mobilisation regarding natural gas and they declared a general strike, to begin at the end of September. On 8 September, the urban dwellers and *vecinos* (neighbours) of the city of El Alto had mobilised against the local mayor’s plan to apply a register that would increase housing taxes (the *formularios maya paya*). Having succeeded in their demand to cancel the municipality’s plan, they mobilised again with a civic strike (no commercial activities, street blockades) in mid-September, now with the unified agenda of natural resources. The CSUTCB mobilisation reacted to the gas demand, and included it as an issue demanded by their mobilisation by mid-September.⁴⁹ The “Warisata massacre” had the effect of unifying these actors, both around the demands regarding natural gas - its non-exportation, nationalisation and industrialisation, which was called the “October Agenda” - and around a common denunciation of the violence of Sánchez de Lozada’s administration as well as the call for his resignation. In October, the main stage of the struggle moved from the rural areas of La Paz department to the city of El Alto, which was paralysed by a third civic strike from 8 October

explained in the next chapter. Qullasuyo was one of the four former jurisdictions of the Inca territory, which corresponds today to the highland and valley Bolivian territory.

⁴⁸ The 2003 road blockades, and their relationship with the memory of Tupac Katari, are going to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁴⁹ On 15 September, according to Felipe Quispe, the executive board of CSUTCB was considering two negotiating tables with the government: one regarding the 72-topic peasant agreement and the other regarding “Gas, FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas], the annulment of neoliberal laws (...)” (Quispe Huanca, 2013, p. 46).

onwards. The government kept to its policy of answering the protests with violence, killing almost 60 people up until 17 October, the day Sánchez de Lozada resigned.⁵⁰

The Aymara peasant activists were decisive in igniting the massive mobilisation that later would be known as the “Gas War”. Even though the final episodes of the struggle did not occur in their territory, they were responsible for the first sparks of confrontation, which then led other sectors to join the struggle. In order to better understand the key role played by these social actors, we will first analyse the more immediate socio-economic context of the Omasuyos province and then sketch the main political projects that appeared during the struggle of 2003. A historical analysis of the region, marked intensely by the expansion of the *haciendas* (large rural properties owned by Spanish descendants) during the colonial and republican period, is presented to cast light upon the relationship of the local population with the state, and to help us to understand the political aspirations of the Aymara peasant activists.

A life with dignity and fair prices

Omasuyos province currently comprises six municipalities: Achacachi, Ancoraimes, Chua Cocani, Huarina, Santiago de Huata and Huatajata, and has 82,664 inhabitants, according to the latest census. Achacachi, the capital of the province, has the majority of the population, with 45,312 people (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2012). In 2003, the importance of the municipality was even greater, since Huarina, Santiago de Huata and Huatajata were all part of Achacachi’s jurisdiction, which had, by then, 70,503 inhabitants (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2005). In 2012, more than 92% of the population of all six municipalities self-identified as Aymara (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2012). As is characteristic of all the provinces around Lake Titicaca, the area is densely populated, around 40 inhabitants per km², and 60% of the economically active population is engaged in the primary sector, mainly agriculture and fishing.⁵¹ It is interesting to note here that, in 2001, this number was much higher for Achacachi, when around 79% of the population was in the primary sector, but in 1992, this number was 62% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2005).⁵² This might indicate that the harsh economic situation at the turn of the century led to a lack of opportunities in other sectors and a reorientation towards traditional peasant activities. The land is very fertile, since it benefits from natural irrigation from the melting of the peaks of the Cordillera Real and of Lake Titicaca,

⁵⁰ Chapters Three and Four will present the dynamics of October in El Alto in greater detail.

⁵¹ Looking at data from the 2012 Census from the six municipalities, there are 46,309 economically active people in the province and, of these, 27,923 are engaged in primary sector activities, which is 60.29% (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2012).

⁵² The numbers for Ancoraimes were very similar though: 79% in 2001 and 71% in 1992.

and the main crops are potatoes, beans, quinoa and maize. People also fish in communities around the lake and herd cattle (mainly for milk) and sheep.

Achacachi's human development index (HDI) is low, 0.565 in 2005, according to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, but is not very different from other rural regions in Bolivia. Data from 2001 indicates that living conditions were harsh in the municipality on the eve of the 2003 mobilisation: only 47% of the households had electricity, 91% of the population were poor and 50% suffered from extreme poverty (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2005).

As mentioned above, the CSUTCB's 70-topic agreement focused particularly on issues of rural development. Aymara peasants justify this demand for development by arguing for a life with less suffering, a more dignified life, as Quispe wrote in his diary. Many activists would relate their lives to the inequality between the city and the countryside, particularly regarding the prices of peasant products. Felipa Huanca, the current head of La Paz departmental federation of peasant women, who was already an important leader from Omasuyos during 2003, describes this tension:

What did the neoliberal governments do? They separated the countryside from the city. The city had more opportunities, better universities, private schools where people could study. In the countryside, [we had] nothing. As if we were not able to think, to do anything, this is how they wanted us to be. And this is why the struggle was so strong in 2003, 2004. In 2005, we had elections, we elected an indigenous president. At this stage, the Aymara, Quechua and Guarani peoples were already a majority, they could govern, we could govern ourselves. Because then we had two Bolivias, one Bolivia with good life conditions, with electricity, water, education, universities, everything, paved roads up to the doorstep. But the other was abandoned, it had no roads, its products were not valued. When they [neoliberal politicians] were deputies, when they were presidents, in one month they earned twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, eighty thousand. In one month. But what we produced in the countryside, an animal we raised in five, six years, how much would we sell it for? 300, 500 bolivianos. Now we sell it for five, six thousand. Before we sold it like that. A sheep, we have to raise it for three years, we would sell it for fifty bolivianos. Do you see the difference? Do you think it's easy to produce, to be in the countryside? It isn't. It's cold, it rains, it's windy. You have to bear everything. But if people don't value your work, where do we stand? ⁵³

Huanca accuses neoliberal governments of undermining the peasant population by allowing a devaluation of their production, a claim upheld by some studies. According to Mamerto Pérez, in 1998, the gross value of highland peasant production was cut by almost half compared to 1985, when neoliberal policies started to be applied (Pérez Luna, 2003, p. 59, 2005, p. 73). Moreover, during the same period, the total production of Andean crops decreased from 203.89 to 139.31 kilograms per capita (Pérez Luna, 2005, p. 71). Pérez blames the policies of economic liberalization that introduced agricultural products from other South American countries, which had the effect of decreasing prices. He also argues that neoliberal governments

⁵³ Interview on 17 July 2013.

failed to promote agro production within peasant and indigenous communities, since the resources that arrived in rural municipalities from the decentralisation and participation laws were mainly used for social investment and not for production incentives (Pérez Luna, 2005, p. 77).⁵⁴

Peasant production might have become more undervalued during neoliberalism, but some authors place it as the main problem faced by highland communities since at least the Agrarian Reform in 1953. According to Javier Hurtado, after regaining the control of their lands and while “facing the market and the state’s indifference and inefficiency”, indigenous peasantry started to “perceive with clarity the unequal exchange between the prices of their products and the prices of the [agricultural] inputs”. Thus, their collective demand became: “fair prices for the peasant products” (Hurtado, 1986, p. 238). The tactic of the road blockade that paralyses the food supply to the urban centres, which appeared during the most important peasant mobilisations in the second half of the twentieth century, is related to the perception of this economic unbalance (Hurtado, 1986, p. 239).

In Omasuyos, not only is income derived from the sale of products insufficient to cover peasant households’ cash needs (for agricultural inputs, clothing, education, transportation, health, etc.), but the parcels of land available for agriculture are too small and barely enough for subsistence. One of my interviewees had only half a hectare of land and indicated that this was common pattern in the area, explaining that families in communities closer to the lake have even smaller parcels. Exceptionally, in some communities, families might have up to five hectares available.⁵⁵ Most people interviewed have multiple economic strategies, with a double household in El Alto sending their children to study in La Paz, or working in the Yungas for extra income during some seasons. In this regard, there is a gendered division of labour, as noted in other highland contexts as well (Canessa, 2012b, p. 228). Many women interviewed had double households and normally went to El Alto or La Paz to be closer to relatives, such as grown-up sons and daughters, and to sell their products in the markets. Conversely, men normally undertook seasonal labour in other rural regions or looked for a job in the industrial, transport or service sector.

This strong association between women and the peasant sector also occurs when a family decides to migrate to the city but still keeps their lands in the rural community of origin. In these cases, women journey seasonally to the countryside for sowing and harvest. In a survey

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, he does not specify the content of this social investment and does not analyse the possible benefits for rural communities in terms of guaranteeing production development in the long term.

⁵⁵ This interview was carried out for some previous research (13 April 2008), anonymously.

conducted in a neighbourhood of El Alto in 2000, Sian Lazar found that only a fifth of respondents declared that they “never visit” their rural community of origin (*pueblo*), and that women visit them more often than men, “usually to help with agricultural duties and/or to look after family members who still live in the countryside” (Lazar, 2006, p. 190). They are also more responsible than men for the family’s food supply. Isabel Álvarez, who was part of a market association during October 2003 and participated in the struggles, says that if she and her relatives do not go back to her parents’ community, which is in Manco Kapac, a highland province of La Paz department, to grow food, “we don’t have anything to eat, because we have too little [money] to buy [food] here”.⁵⁶ Very few of El Alto’s male leaders interviewed for this research mentioned any important relationship with the countryside or even a peasant background.

We can identify in these cases of seasonal migrations and double households a combined mechanism of a gendered division of labour and of multi-sectoral activities that allows a permanent subvention of urban labour by peasant households. This mechanism guarantees, on the one hand, more opportunities for reproduction for a household, but on the other, it increases the exploitation experienced by the whole peasant sector. Rogelio Mayta, lawyer of the victims of October, explains Aymara peasants’ dissatisfaction at the beginning of the twentieth century in these terms:

During those times, there was no agricultural credit, the countryside kept subsidising a small sector of Bolivian society, wealthy people. (...) The indigenous and native [*originario*] sector is the one who subsidises them, with their products, with their cheap workforce, because they are not only in the countryside, they are in El Alto, on the slopes. In 2003, the minimal wage was 400 bolivianos, 50 dollars a month, which is 600 dollars per year. This is what the Mallku [Felipe Quispe] questions.⁵⁷

In this context, Omasuyos has some further particularities: it is a densely populated region, in which Aymara peasant families have struggled during the last decades to survive not only because the prices of agricultural products are undervalued, but also because their parcels of land are too small. However, the proximity with other economic centres (El Alto, La Paz, Yungas) and with the Peruvian borders provide the Omasuyos population with other economic opportunities, which explains probably why the region is still so densely populated. While this provides households with more security while facing national crises, it also means that Omasuyos has more links with different sectors of the national economy than other rural provinces, which might provide its population with a privileged perception of national affairs. In

⁵⁶ Interview on 6 December 2012.

⁵⁷ Interview on 25 March 2013.

2003, Aymara peasant leaders presented an incisive political project, which defended an indigenous government for Bolivia. We turn to it now.

Qullasuyo Marka: the other Bolivia

In her testimony above, Felipa Huanca recovers the idea of “Two Bolivias” to explain her perception of injustice. One Bolivia, identified with the city and elite spaces, had “good life conditions, with electricity, water, education, universities, everything, paved roads up to the doorstep”. The other, related to the countryside, “was abandoned, it had no roads, its products were not valued”. Thus, the distinction between the “Bolivias” is defined not only by ethnicity and economic inequalities, but also geographically. The city is not understood as an objective category that encompasses the whole urban territory, but it is a representation of the space where the political white-*mestizo* elite lives, a place depicted as being full of opportunities. This was a space that was closed to indigenous peasant people until very recently.⁵⁸ El Alto and its rural migrants and precarious workforce do not enter this symbolic representation of city. They stand outside the “city”, because they are also understood as poor, peasant, indigenous and majoritarian. The city is a space of the empowered minority, an island of wealth, the “*q’ara* Bolivia”, in Quispe’s words. The rulers of this Bolivia are perceived either as foreigners from “imperialist” nations or Bolivian *mestizo* and white people, *vende-patrias* in the contemporary political context.

Behind the very popular idea of “Two Bolivias” stands the reconstitution of the Qullasuyo, which is most times understood as a re-foundation of Bolivia itself. “Qullasuyo Marka” is not equivalent to an Aymara nation; it is depicted as the Bolivia of the indigenous people, of the poor people, the “true” Bolivia. This is how Zenobia Chura, a leader who has participated in the peasant unions since the 1980s, explains the goals of the September and October mobilisation and the sort of government they were defending:

Those *vende-patrias* [traitors of the nation] were going to sell all Bolivia. (...) We must have a government that works for us, that likes us and Bolivia. We say Qullasuyo Marka. They have to like us, they shouldn’t sell our objects. If they sell everything from us, we will mobilise. This was the goal, and we reached it. Goni [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada] was gone.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Indigenous people were prohibited from going to the main square of La Paz, Plaza Murillo, during most of the first half of the twentieth century. The ban dates from the first liberal governments and was only abolished in 1944 by the government of Villarroel (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 50–51). As recently as January 2015, some customers of a shopping centre in Irpavi, south of La Paz, complained about the “dirtiness” of the people of El Alto, who started to go to the place after the opening of new cable cars connecting El Alto and the elite neighbourhood (W. Pérez, 2015).

⁵⁹ Interview on 15 July 2013.

The testimonies replicate the polysemy regarding the Bolivia presented in the idea of “Two Bolivias”. One experienced leader condemns neoliberal governments for not investing in “his” Bolivia (*mi Bolivia*), which in Spanish suggests a sentimental attachment, and a couple of seconds later declares “I don’t consider myself Bolivian, (...) I’m from Qullasuyo, from Abya Yala”.⁶⁰ Pedro Lucana, a leader from Warisata, while explaining the goals of the Katarista movement, says that they needed an indigenous political leader, someone Aymara or Quechua, someone “truly Bolivian” (*Boliviano neto*).⁶¹ Vicenta Mamani, who participated in the hunger strike with Felipe Quispe in 2003, says that they wanted to “save Bolivia”, because it was going to disappear with all the sacking of natural resources. Then she expands on this, saying that they wanted an Aymara president, an indigenous government: “We ourselves wanted to govern Bolivia. It should be Qullasuyo Marka, not Bolivia. There are two Bolivias here, two *markas*”.⁶²

The appeal for an indigenous government derives from the need to represent that majority. The current support Omasuyos peasant leaders give to the Evo Morales administration, despite Quispe’s opposition to it, is understandable if seen through such a lens. Morales is not a typical Aymara peasant or indigenous leader but he is still recognised as one of them.

The focus on Qullasuyo Marka or on the “other Bolivia” contrasts with many approaches that have identified a project of Aymara nationalism as a predominant feature of the population of this area.⁶³ Besides being one of the main voices behind the idea of “Two Bolivias”, Felipe Quispe is also one of the main defenders of an “Aymara nation”, which adds considerable complexity to the political characterisation of the area. In some statements, Quispe identifies the Aymara nation as equivalent to Qullasuyo and as a political unity detached from the Bolivian state:

[Aymara nation] is to separate us from Bolivia, to reconstitute the Qullasuyo, because we have Aymara brothers in Peru, in Chile, Arica, and others that are in North Argentina. (...) We wanted to unify with the brothers in Chile and Peru, we could have our own access to the sea. The Bolivians as Bolivians don’t have sea. We have it, the Qullasuyo people. Chileans don’t have sea. Mapuches, Aymaras of Chile, native people have it.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Anonymous 2, interview on 28 June 2013.

⁶¹ Interview on 6 July 2013.

⁶² Interview on 27 June 2013. *Marka* is the geographical unit above the *ayllus* and, in the Toledan reforms, corresponded to the jurisdiction of the colonial town.

⁶³ On Aymara nationalism, see Canessa (2000) and Makaran-Kubis (2009).

⁶⁴ Interview on 18 September 2013.

This statement is compatible with traditional conceptions of nationalism, “a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). According to this perspective, when the national unit (Aymara nation) is not congruent with the state unit (Bolivia), a new territorialisation of the state is required. Therefore, nationalisms as political movements demand territorial unifications or separations at the state level. Quispe’s statement is, therefore, distinct from the current intellectual formulations on “plurinationality” that identify the “nations” as cultural and autonomous units that do not necessarily require a state for themselves. “Differently from what occurs with new European countries”, argue Albó and Barrios, nations of “native peoples who have a high conscience of their own identity” do not demand “separate states”, “certainly because they do not consider them viable in the socio-economic context in which they move”. This is the reason why they defend the idea of a “Plurinational state” (Albó & Barrios S., 2007, p. 101). This intellectual perspective supports an indigenous autonomy internally, regarding the cultural and political life of the “nations” themselves, and a Plurinational State externally, in which this national diversity could be represented.

Conversely, Quispe defends a project with a clear “hegemonic” intentionality, either in the sphere of the Aymara nation or in his defence of the “second”, indigenous, Bolivia. Along the same lines, some authors, such as Gaya Makaran-Kubis, have identified the “Republic of Qullasuyo” as being a projection of an Aymara state: “the Aymara activists defend the cultural and territorial continuity between Qullasuyo and the current Aymara people, which is visible in their proposition of creating a ‘Republic *Qullasuyana*’, independent of the current Bolivian state” (2009, p. 46).

However, the majority of the interviews in this research have indicated that Qullasuyo Marka is not actually equivalent to an “Aymara nation”, and this position is clear at least among peasant leaders in Omasuyos. They conceptualise Qullasuyo Marka as being the other “face” of Bolivia, defined in its opposition but also based on what Bolivia should be. Therefore, the struggle for the Qullasuyo Marka is much more related to taking power in Bolivia, and changing the cultural references that define it as nation, than to creating a separate state.

Another surprising element of these testimonies is that they do not particularly emphasise the idea of an autonomous indigenous government. Rather, their ideal of self-determination was most times identified with the power struggle within Bolivia as a whole. Their aim was to have an indigenous government in the Palacio Quemado (seat of the executive branch of the Bolivian state), not simply in their own territories. That is to say that they identified the Bolivian people as the most important and sovereign political actor and saw themselves, the Aymara, as the vanguard of the nation. The ideas of “saving” Bolivia and of them being the “true”

Bolivians indicate that the sphere of their political project was not an autonomous Aymara territory negotiated within the Bolivian state, but the totality of Bolivia. Self-determination is, thus, understood through a majoritarian appeal: they should not only determine the Aymara territory, but also, as indigenous, be actors in the self-determination of the Bolivian people as a whole.

This study does not rule out the possibility of a strong Aymara nationalism or an incisive demand for local indigenous autonomy vis-à-vis the Bolivian state. Most probably, had this research focused on Aymara urban intellectuals, covered periods in which the Aymara peasant struggle was less imbricated with a national struggle, or had been carried out in Aymara and not Spanish, different narratives or political projects would have emerged. Nevertheless, this study highlights an aspect that is normally left behind in many analyses of the Aymara activists: their struggle for power at the centre of the Bolivian state. In this sense, their project is similar to the indigenous Bolivian nationalism presented by the MAS, as identified by Pablo Stefanoni (2008).

The engagement with the state shown by the Aymara sectors in the La Paz highlands can only be fully understood if we consider its specific historical formation. The next section, therefore, investigates the history of Omasuyos province regarding the relationship the Indian population had established with the state during the past few centuries.

Hacienda expansion, access to markets and Indian resistance

You know, there are two... People's characters are very different in the places that had *haciendas* and in the places where true natives [*originarios verdaderos*] have lived without the *haciendas*. Where the Spanish invaders arrived, they raped women, everything happened. This root, this blood is still there. Spanish character is very incisive [*tajante*], people say. I do something, this way, and it's done. And this word 'incisive' grows the rebellion. (...) People were abused.⁶⁵

This is how Cipriana Apaza explains why highland people from La Paz are more rebellious. She was a leader in the *juntas vecinales* (neighbourhood councils) in El Alto during 2003, but was born and raised in a community close to Santiago de Huata, in Omasuyos. Like many women, she lives "here and there", between the urban masses of El Alto and her small crops at the shores of Lake Titicaca. She identifies the colonial experience with the *hacienda* period, and people that lived in the *haciendas* as those who suffered the violence of the conquest.⁶⁶ The *haciendas* were spread unevenly within Bolivian territory, occupying mainly fertile valley and highland lands, such as Omasuyos, in the departments of Cochabamba and La

⁶⁵ Interview on 23 November 2012.

⁶⁶ According to Canessa, the oral history of a community in an Aymara peasant community in Larecaja also places the *hacienda* experience (*patruna pacha*) as equivalent to colonialism and the arrival of the Spanish in general (Canessa, 2012b, pp. 80–86).

Paz. The history of Omasuyos province reflects this radical experience of *hacienda* and the way local Indian people managed to struggle against it.

Omasuyos literally means the water territory and was the name used to identify the lands between the east shore of Lake Titicaca and the high peaks of the Cordillera Real during pre-colonial and colonial times (Albó, 1979, p. 7; Paredes, 1955, p. 18). The region is at an altitude of around 3,800m, but the natural irrigation caused by the melting of the peaks has created fertile lands and one of the warmest climates in the highlands, and the area has been densely populated since pre-Inca periods (Albó, 1979, p. 8). The current province covers only a part of what has been traditionally considered the region of Omasuyos; since Independence in 1826, it has been divided into four provinces: Los Andes, Manco Kapac, Omasuyos itself and Camacho. However, the province's capital, Achacachi, still remains an important political centre for all four provinces of the old Omasuyos (Albó, 1979, pp. 7–11).



Map 2 – Omasuyos and neighbouring provinces today.

Most of the towns in the region, including Achacachi, were founded during the Toledan reforms in the late sixteenth century (Paredes, 1955, p. 19-20), which created the “Indian towns” (*pueblos de reducción de indios*) as a political centre of the *ayllus* of a region. This new organisation restricted the territoriality of the *ayllus*, the cornerstone of the Andean socio-political organisation, which were units comprised of smaller communities that were not territorially continuous and occupied different ecological levels sometimes hundreds of kilometres apart.⁶⁷ Achacachi was the capital of Omasuyos and the seat of the caciques, the main indigenous authorities, and the *corregidor*, the local colonial authority.⁶⁸

Easily connected to La Paz across the plain highland [*altiplano*], Omasuyos was a focus of *hacienda* expansion after the city emerged as an important centre for the commerce of coca leaves in the Yungas during colonial times.⁶⁹ The first *haciendas* appeared in the second half of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century there were already 12 private rural estates in the area (Albó, 1979, p. 16).

During the famous anti-colonial rebellions of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Katari in the late eighteenth century, Achacachi played an important role as an intermediate rebel centre between Azángaro, where the Amaru family was based after their defeat in Cuzco, and the siege of La Paz (Valle de Siles, 1990, p. 66). Indian communities from the whole province mobilised under both centres of leadership, and Laja (now Los Andes province) and Tiquina (now Manco Kapac province) were also important *foci* of rebellion besides Achacachi (Valle de Siles, 1990, p. 64).

During the colonial and most of the republican periods, it was important for the state to maintain the traditional communities, since they were a source of the mining workforce and the tribute charged in each community according to their male adult population.⁷⁰ After independence, local landowning elites had more influence in state affairs and when the state

⁶⁷ On the organisation of the *ayllu* in different ecological levels, see Murra’s concept of “vertical archipelagos” (1972).

⁶⁸ Citing the work of Thierry Saignes, Thomson describes Indian political organisation in the eighteenth century, which dated back to the Toledan reforms: “The highest level of organization coincided with the Indian town (*marka*) and its jurisdiction. This unit was in turn divided into two halves or moieties (*parcialidades*) usually termed Anansaya and Urinsaya, each of which had its own Indian governor or cacique (a Taino appellation applied by the Spaniards to the Andean lords known as *kuraka* in Quechua and *mallku* in Aymara). Each moiety was comprised of a cluster of local units called *ayllus*, represented by their own *hilacata* authorities. The local *ayllu* consisted of a set of hamlets (*estancias*) made up of closely kin-related peasant households” (Thomson, 2002, pp. 23–24).

⁶⁹ According to Pentland, writing in his famous report of 1826, it is from the commerce of coca that the “rich people [*propietarios*] in La Paz acquire their main income” (1975, p. 45).

⁷⁰ The tribute was a tax paid by each Indian community to the Spanish Crown, a system that was maintained by the Bolivian state after independence. By 1846, 54% of the state’s revenue was comprised of the Indian tribute (Dalence, 1851, p. 363).

became less dependent on the tribute in the second half of the nineteenth century, the *haciendas* started to expand over the best located and most fertile Indian lands, such as the ones in Omasuyos.⁷¹

Most of the data available on the *hacienda* expansion are official reports on the tributary categories of the Indian population: *originarios* (native from the zone, entitled to land), *forasteros* or *agregados* (landless, living in free communities) and *yanaconas*. *Yanacona* was the name given to a landless Indian living inside the *haciendas* who exchanged his service to have access to small parcels of land for their individual crops. His duties included work on the crops of the landowner (*patrón*) three or four days a week and free personal service for the *patrón*, his family or the *hacienda* administrator (*mayordomo*), in a system called *pongueaje* (Klein, 1993, p. 147). This system allowed intense exploitation and violence against Indian people, who not only suffered the seizure of their lands and had to organise themselves into “captive communities” inside the *haciendas* but were also subjected to rape, beatings and heavily exploitative workloads.

Since the beginning of the republic in 1825, Omasuyos concentrated a large number of *yanaconas* and *haciendas*. In 1838, 44% of its Indian tributary population was comprised of *yanaconas*, a high proportion if compared to other densely populated highland provinces such as Pacajes or Sicasica, which had, respectively, only 18% and 30% of *yanacona* population during the same period (Grieshaber, 1980, p. 226). Gathering data from 10 different *cantones* in Omasuyos in 1846, Josep M. Barnadas identified 129 *haciendas*, 30 just in Achacachi. During that year, the number of *yanaconas* was equivalent to around 50% of the total taxed Indian population (7,727 in 15,396).

Of all the governments that attempted to dissolve Indian communities by transforming them into private *haciendas*, Mariano Melgarejo was the most radical and violent in his measures. In his confiscation decree of 1866, he declared that all community lands were state property and that Indian families had to buy titles within two months in order to avoid the sale of their lands. His measures allowed the sale of whole communities to one landowner and, by 1870, over 1.25 million pesos had been gathered by the government through land auctions (Larson, 2004, pp. 216–218).

Communities in Omasuyos, Sicasica and Pacajes mobilised against the Melgarejo administration and joined opposition forces in its overthrow in 1870. Three major uprisings occurred in Tiquina, Huaycho and Ancoraimes (territories of the old Omasuyos province) and over a thousand Indians were killed by the army (Klein, 1983, p. 111). Huaycho in particular,

⁷¹ For a detailed study of the expansion of the *haciendas* during the nineteenth century, see Klein (1993).

which suffered a series of massacres, has become an “epicentre of local Indian communities against Melgarejo”. Luciano Willka, the “Commander-in-Chief of Indigenous Community Members”, who joined Casimiro Corral and Agustín Morales to overthrow the president in 1871, was from Huaycho itself (Hylton, 2010, pp. 60–61). According to Marta Irurozqui, the uprising against Melgarejo was not only an opportunity for the Indian population to resist the seizure of their lands, but was also a moment of “public inclusion” and “acquisition of national conscience” (Irurozqui, 2003, p. 144). She argues that, by participating in such national events, Indian people “assimilated the rhetoric of the nation and of citizenship, participated actively in the political game, and even supported governmental projects” (Irurozqui, 2003, p. 145).

After the overthrow of Melgarejo, the auctions were cancelled and community lands were returned. Thus, until the 1870s, Indian communities were considerably successful in guaranteeing at least that the *haciendas* did not expand further. According to Grieshaber, the proportions between tenants and Indians in free communities were surprisingly stable from 1838 until 1877 in Omasuyos and other highland provinces (Grieshaber, 1980, p. 242). Nevertheless, the state continued to promote the despoliation of Indian lands. In 1874, the Disentailment Act (*Ley de Exvinculación*) extinguished Indian communities as “juridical, taxpaying and landholding units” and re-designated Indians as small property owners, raising their individual taxes.⁷² The effect was not immediately felt by communities but resistance emerged across the highlands at the beginning of the 1880s, particularly in Omasuyos and Sicasica (Larson, 1999, p. 667). Between 1881 and 1886, the sale of Indian land, most of it forced, was intense (Klein, 1993, p. 156), and the agrarian organisation of the highlands in La Paz department started to effectively change. Gathering data from Achacachi, Barnadas identified 55 *haciendas* with five or more tenants, which occupied 99% of private lands and around 90% of the workforce, concentrated in the hands of 31 local landowners (Barnadas, 1978, pp. 33–35).

This is the background for the Federal War that exploded in 1899. After the continuous attack on community lands promoted by the conservative government, Indian communities backed liberal oppositional forces. They had developed a network of leaders, the *caciques apoderados*, to resist land grabbing through legal documents, since some laws of the 1880s allowed communities to be recognised if they held colonial property titles. Supported by this network of *apoderados*, the commander of the Indian army was Pablo Zárate Villca, from Sicasica, who adopted the name of the rebels of Huaycho. The aims of this “trans-regional

⁷² This moment could be considered what the Marxist tradition has called primitive accumulation, when a considerable portion of the peasantry ceased to have access to land, promoting Bolivia’s transition to capitalist social relations.

network”, according to Hylton, was to “determine the rights of Indian communities to self-government, as well as judicial authority and territorial sovereignty” (Hylton, 2010, p. 87). These political objectives were combined with a project of “regenerated Bolivia” and were temporarily “meshed” with the liberals’ federalism, which “promised the return of stolen community, as 1871, and end neo-colonial taxes and tribute exactions” (Hylton, 2010, p. 164). Thus, Indian leaders defended self-government and territorial autonomy, but also proposed a project of a Bolivian fatherland that would include Indian people as “legitimate participants at the local, regional, and national levels” (Hylton, 2010, p. 171). In a proclamation, Villca said that both white and Indian people should “rose up to defend the Republic of Bolivia”; they were “children of Bolivia”, who “should love each other like brothers” (Kuenzli, 2013, p. 16).

After the war, Indian leaders were accused of promoting a “race war” against all white and *mestizo* people and the Indian project of “regeneration” was temporarily forgotten (Hylton, 2010, p. 172). Likewise, the *hacienda* encroachment increased even further in the first decades of the twentieth century, a period of the liberal government. Gathering data from Pacajes province, Rivera identifies that, between 1901 and 1920, 44,687 hectares of land were sold, while over the previous twenty years this number was 33,401 hectares. Similarly in Achacachi, there were only six Indian communities left, surrounded by 48 *haciendas* in 1914 (Albó, 1979, p. 17; Paredes, 1955, pp. 26–29).

Given the impressive growth of the *haciendas*, it is not surprising that the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed many peasant struggles in the highlands of La Paz, a “cycle of uprisings” that covered the period from 1910 to 1930 (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 26). In 1914, a rebellion demanding the recognition and restitution of communal lands started in Pacajes, spreading to many other regions (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 32). In 1921, an uprising occurred in Jesús de Machaca, Ingavi province (old Pacajes territory), demanding the validity of colonial deeds but also complaining about the trade monopoly held by landowners and townspeople.

In fact, the expansion of the *haciendas* was not the only phenomenon prejudicial to indigenous communities during the nineteenth century; the railway also had a major impact. Indians were normally the owners of mule trains, the main means of cargo transport in the highlands, a business that effectively disappeared. Moreover, the railway facilitated the import of products controlled by *mestizo* merchants in the towns (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 28–29). Combined with the encroachment of the *haciendas*, which restricted the commercialisation of goods produced by their own crops, Indian people had considerably less power at the beginning of the twentieth century than a century earlier, when they held an important place in Bolivian society by managing the carrier trade around the highlands. In the *pongueaje* system, they were the workforce carrying the landowners’ goods to the city of La Paz, undertaking a task that they

had managed for their own benefit before. Albó compiled an interesting testimony of a former *yanacóna* in Omasuyos just after the 1952 revolution, who was constantly arrested because he refused to provide the *pongueaje* services already abolished by the government. Although he was forced to carry the landowners' products to the city of La Paz, he used the trips to visit authorities and to reassure himself of his new rights (Albó, 1979, pp. 43–45).

Access to the markets was the main issue behind a movement that spread in Omasuyos at the beginning of the twentieth century, when a messianic upsurge led by the Indian Fernando Huanaco appeared in Qarisa, a region already occupied by *haciendas*. In 1920, he promised that the region would be able to produce staples typical of the valleys and lowlands, such as maize, rice and coffee. Later, in 1931, the chapel built by the movement became a centre of festivities, religious peregrination and a weekly market, which brought together around 2,000 Indians to directly market their products (Albó, 1979, pp. 21–22). In comparison to other more active uprisings, Rivera considers the Omasuyos messianism a “form of passive resistance”, understandable given the fact that the communities “were extremely weak” and the estate owners held an “all-embracing trade monopoly” in Achacachi region during that period (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 35).

In Omasuyos province, there was no *cacique* movement comparable to those in Pacajes and Jesús de Machaca, and acts of resistance only threatened the landowners' power in indirect ways. As early as 1914, however, the province was already known as “rebellious” region, probably because its tradition of actively participating in the convulsions of national politics, as had happened in 1870, was maintained during the first decades of the twentieth century. In his monograph on Omasuyos, the historian Manuel Rigoberto Paredes praises the rebellious character of the local people.⁷³ Even though it is hard to evaluate the role played by Indians in his depiction, Omasuyos' inhabitants were reputed as being “inclined to struggle”: “This is the geographic state in which the famous and legendary province of Omasuyos finds itself. Its history is intimately linked with the country's political convulsions, because no province has given more of its children's blood in the country's civil wars” (Paredes, 1955, p. 21). He complements his account later:

That singular obsession with struggle influences the battalion made up of the sons of this province so that they may be brave and fight heroically in the battles incited by our civil wars.

⁷³ Manuel Rigoberto Paredes was a historian from La Paz and wrote most of his work at the beginning of the twentieth century. He was one of the first to demonstrate an interest in cultural and political issues related to the Indian population, becoming a known folklorist. He wrote books dedicated to the rural provinces of La Paz department and was the first Bolivian author to write a monograph on Tupac Katari, as we will see in Chapter Three.

The courage and the hardiness of the omasuyeño is legendary in Bolivia. In the first eras of the Republic, the provinces of Omasuyos and Pacajes provided two volunteer battalions, which gathered to active military service at the first call of the executive. Each canton contributed a company of soldiers, the captain of which was the *corregidor* (Paredes, 1955, p. 25).⁷⁴

After his coup d'état in 1920, Bautista Saavedra, founder of the Republican Party, benefitted from the support of the Indians of Omasuyos, the so-called “sheep of Achacachi”, as an informal republican army to react against the liberal opposition (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 68). Saavedra was a landowner in Omasuyos and benefitted from this situation to gain support of the local Indian people (Albó, 1979, p. 25). Even though he did not challenge the *hacienda* system, he established a dialogue with Indian organisations to promote policies in social and educative areas (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 68). Hernando Siles, the following republican president, also benefitted from the support of the *caciques apoderados* from the highland provinces in their struggle to recover their lands. As at other times in history, such clientelist relationships did not prevent those governments from perpetrating massacres, such as in Jesús de Machaca in 1921 and in Chayanta in 1927 (Ticona Alejo, 2005, pp. 68–69).

One of the most interesting figures to support Siles was Manuel Chachawayna, who ran in the legislative elections of 1927. Being an Aymara Indian from Omasuyos, Chachawayna fulfilled the conditions for citizenship, which included literacy and being male, but was not elected by his restricted constituency. Far from adopting traditional republican discourse, his campaign statement expressed a clear ethnic program for Bolivia: “we are not only able to be the electors, but also be elected; (...) we should start by the legislative branch to later arrive in the presidency, since we are the majority”. In a statement that appears to be echoed in the “two Bolivias” formulation of current Aymara struggles, one of his goals was: “to emancipate my race from the mentoring of the white and *mestizo* state authorities (...) that oppress it in an intolerable way with its violence and impositions” (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 75).

The demand of recovering indigenous land from the *haciendas* made only an indirect reference to the Chachawayna program: “to guarantee the prosecution of white and *mestizo* people who kill Indians with impunity with the objective to take their properties and goods for small price or nothing” (Ticona Alejo, 2005, p. 75). After decades of *hacienda* encroachment, the Indians from Omasuyos appeared to have abandoned the endogenous politics of the defence of the *ayllu*'s territoriality and engaged in direct actions within national politics, with links to major political parties and related economic and social struggles. Chachawayna's central concern was Indian citizenship and political participation without white tutelage and issues related to that,

⁷⁴ Albó also describes Omasuyos' support of Belzu in the mid-nineteenth century, which was called by then the “loyalty town” (Albó, 1979, p. 24).

such as literacy. Requirements to be able to vote and to manage legal contentions, education and literacy were understood as pressing needs and Omasuyos region had pioneering experience in this area. The *ayllu* school of Warisata, one of the few free communities around Achacachi, was founded by Elisardo Pérez and Avelino Siñani on 2 August 1931, a date that is up till today celebrated as national “Indian day”.⁷⁵ It was a project that incorporated many principles of the Andean community into the school, such as the *amauta* council that assisted the school’s management.⁷⁶

From the Chaco War to ponchos rojos

The Chaco War (1932-1935), fought between Paraguay and Bolivia, brought deep changes to Bolivian society, with the emergence of new political and social groups that threatened the traditional political and economic elites. The war affected the communities intensely, since indigenous soldiers were for the first time massively recruited to an international war. In Warisata, writes Pérez, once war was declared, the local population decided to engage in the conflict, sending men and food to the recruitment centres (1962, pp. 166–167). In his famous account of the crisis as a moment of national unification, Zavaleta Mercado considers “Nanawa”, a battle of the war, as the element of intersubjectivity that connects so many different social groups and their distinct production modes in the country. The war was also a nationalising event (Zavaleta Mercado, 2009, p. 216).

Gualberto Villarroel’s government (1943-1946) abolished *pongueaje* and supported the first Indian congress of Bolivia, held in the city of La Paz in 1945. Villarroel was killed by a mob of political opponents in July 1946, and a conservative government assumed power. In 1947, many uprisings spread through the Bolivian countryside, including the departments of La Paz, Oruro, Potosi, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca and Tarija (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 55), involving both Indian tenants (*yanaconas*) in *haciendas* and free indigenous communities.⁷⁷ According to Rivera, there were two different techniques of struggle: work-to-rule strikes inside the

⁷⁵ In 1937, President Germán Busch declared the “2 August” as “Indian Day” to honour the school. Later, the decree of the Agrarian Reform, in 1953, was signed symbolically on the same date, but the day started to be called “Peasant Day”. During the government of Evo Morales, the date has been called “Day of the Indian and of Interculturality”, “Native Peoples Day” and “Day of the Communitarian and Productive Agrarian Revolution”. See Soria Galvarro (2015).

⁷⁶ *Amauta*, in Aymara, means wise men. The amauta council was usually formed by elders from the communities. For more information on the Warisata school, see Pérez (1962).

⁷⁷ For a detailed account on how the 1947 rebellion happened in the Cochabamba Valley and the events that preceded it from 1880 onwards, see Gotkowitz (2007).

haciendas, which reflected a less tense relationship between the Indian population and the landowners and townspeople, and the siege of towns, which echoed a more radical territorial and ethnic conflict (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 56–57). In La Paz, the local federation of workers, with anarchist leanings, played an important role supporting Indian leaderships during the revolts (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 58).

Many provinces in La Paz joined the rebellion – Pacajes, Ingavi, Los Andes, Larecaja, Yungas – but Omasuyos was not among them.⁷⁸ According to Xavier Albó, the explanation comes from a sentiment of loyalty (rather than passivity) that the tenants held regarding their respective landowners, established during earlier decades. The support the Indian people offered to Saavedra was indicative of this relationship, since he was a landowner from the zone. During the following years, the province was still an area of conflict but the struggles emerged between *haciendas*, whose owners were either republicans (as Saavedra) or liberals, and used tenants to support hostilities against their neighbours (Albó, 1979, pp. 25–26).

One possible consequence is that the peasant unions, already very active in the Cochabamba valleys during the 1940s, only appeared in Omasuyos after the 1952 revolution. Once the revolution had taken place, Luciano Quispe and Toribio Salas, leaders linked to the ruling Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), organised a local peasant militia of more than ten thousand men in Belén. According to Albó, the objective of those militias was to frighten the landowners and “provide confidence” to the peasantry. The militia was successful in controlling the province’s territory and many landowners fled from Achacachi even before agrarian reform was declared in 1953 (Albó, 1979, p. 46). Within a couple of years, the situation of the province changed completely and landowner power was totally replaced by that of peasant leaders, such as Quispe, Salas and Wila Sacu (Paulino Quispe). One of the interesting elements of this replacement is that there were few clashes between landowners and tenants in the agrarian reform process. Albó notes that in Achacachi, from the 60 existing *haciendas*, there was not a single case of confrontation and many former tenants kept serving their *patrones* in many ways even in the decades following the revolution (Albó, 1979, pp. 54–55).

The emergent peasant movement in Omasuyos had a strong attachment to national politics, their first leaders being promoted by the governing MNR. During the leadership of Toribio Salas (1955-1963), the links between Omasuyos and the radical left-wing leaders of the COB, led by Juan Lechín, increased. Salas was a supporter of Lechín, and Salas’ collaborator, Wila Saco, would later be part of the *Bloque Independiente Campesino* (BIC). The BIC was one of the

⁷⁸ Los Andes, however, was part of Omasuyos province until the beginning of the twentieth century.

first autonomous peasant initiatives against the Military-Peasant Pact, and it was affiliated to the COB and participated in the 1971 Popular Assembly.⁷⁹ Omasuyos' fame as a zone of rebellion increased during the military dictatorship, when General René Barrientos was expelled by a peasant mob from Achacachi because of his plan to impose a "single tax" on the countryside (Albó, 1979, pp. 104–105).

The Katarista movement emerged during the late 1960s, unifying peasants and urban movements. In the urban context, students from peasant backgrounds in high schools and universities in La Paz started cultural and political movements inspired by the struggle of Tupac Katari. Despite their formal citizenship after the 1952 revolution, those Aymara migrants from the highland provinces of La Paz suffered everyday discrimination and racism from urban white and *mestizo* people. In the same period, other Aymara migrant groups formed cultural centres that promoted cultural integration between city and countryside, offering workshops, seminars and radio programmes. Many of those urban migrants returned to their original communities in highland provinces, particularly in Aroma province, and formed a new strand of peasant leaders, such as Jenaro Flores and Raimundo Tambo.⁸⁰ They were also the post-revolution generation and had more autonomy than the generation before, who had held a relationship of dependence and gratitude towards the state and the MNR leaders who emerged after 1952. These peasant leaders, unlike those of the BIC, were distrusted by the COB because of their openly "ethnic" discourse. They signed the Tiwanaku Manifesto in 1973 and directly asserted Indian culture, new forms of exploitation after the revolution, the lack of representation in state policies and the lack of autonomy of peasant unions (Hurtado, 1986; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 112–117).⁸¹

During the 1970s, under the Banzer dictatorship, a clandestine peasant organisation was maintained by Katarista leaders. The main support for this new organisation was in the province of Aroma, but Omasuyos was one of the pillars of the movement.⁸² At a provincial congress in

⁷⁹ See note 34 on the Military-Peasant Pact.

⁸⁰ According to Hurtado, the promoters of the Katarista movement were a middle sector of the Aroma peasantry, who came from families that were able to send their sons to secondary education or university studies in the city of La Paz. They had experienced a couple of years of residence in La Paz, where they joined urban Katarista initiatives, and later came back to their communities, where they promoted Katarism as a peasant unionist movement (Hurtado, 1986, pp. 39–40).

⁸¹ The organisations that signed the manifest are: Túpac Katari Peasant Centre, the Mink'a Centre, the National Association of Peasant Teachers, the Association of Peasant Students in Bolivia, and the Puma Cultural Centre (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 117).

⁸² Hurtado mentions that Omasuyos was against the election of Jenaro Flores for La Paz departmental peasant federation in 1971, since its leader, Dionisio Osco, was a rival of the Aroma leaders. However, he states that leaders such as Osco had no rank-and-file support and soon Omasuyos became an important region for the Katarists (Hurtado, 1986, pp. 38–39).

1978, a new peasant direction with Katarista leanings was elected, despite persecution by the government. The region also voted massively for the Unión Democrática y Popular (UDP) coalition, supported by Jenaro Flores (Albó, 1979, pp. 120–122). In 1979, the Kataristas unified with the BIC and the Julián Apaza peasant federation, founding the CSUTCB.

Daniel Rojas, one of the members of this first Katarista leadership elected in 1978 in Omasuyos, explains the main issues during those years. He remembers the struggle for the recovery of democracy: “we have supported Domitila Chungara in her hunger strike, we sent comrades [*compañeros*] to help her”.⁸³ He also states some of the differences between this new generation of Kataristas and the old left-wing militants of the BIC: “They were exiled in Cuba, these leaders. But they had little experience of awareness raising among the people. When we, the young, started, we raised the awareness to carry forward the revolution, above all”. His testimony suggests that there were many shared ideological positions between these groups and that probably the major difference was the ground work the Kataristas were able to do among the communities in Omasuyos. Even if the word ‘revolution’ has many interpretations, Rojas relates it to a conception of good organisation:⁸⁴

Here in Achacachi, there were deaths, plunder, those things. (...) In two mandates [*gestiones*] I was ratified by the unified confederation. It was growing stronger and stronger. We, leaders [*dirigentes*], are temporary, right? Then the struggle was this way, it was strong, the brothers would fight even with stones and slings. Here in the province, we also had weapons. We had confronted the army, the police, they were afraid of us.⁸⁵

Like many peasant leaders of Omasuyos, Rojas is proud of his province and believes that it plays a vanguard role in the peasant movement. A common term used to describe people from Omasuyos is *camasa*, meaning courage, strength or power in Aymara. According to Rojas, many weapons came from the period of the peasant militias, during the years following the 1952 revolution.⁸⁶ Because of that, says Rojas, “every government was afraid of Omasuyos”:

[...] People are rebellious here in the province, their blood is colder. They don’t care if they die. When they get angry, it’s serious. Everything starts from here (...). Now, what we plan here at the political level, at worldwide level, is the *ponchos rojos*. In my day it was red jacket, *Wila Sacu*.⁸⁷

⁸³ He makes reference to the hunger strike promoted by the wives of persecuted state miners whose main public figure of the hunger strike was Domitila Chungara. The strike quickly spread to the whole country and debilitated considerably Bánzer dictatorship. Interview on 23 June 2013.

⁸⁴ One of the main local translations of revolution is the concept of *pachakuti*, explored by some authors presented in Chapter One. For further discussions on revolution in Bolivian context, see Hylton and Thomson (2007).

⁸⁵ Interview on 23 June 2013.

⁸⁶ Some other interviewees would date these weapons from the Chaco War period.

⁸⁷ Interview on 23 June 2013.

Ponchos Rojos, red ponchos, is a common denomination for the Aymara peasants of Omasuyos that became widespread during the government of Evo Morales. According to Raúl Bautista, it was during a meeting in 2006 that the Vice-President Álvaro García Linera “baptised” them *ponchos rojos*, making reference to the blood of Omasuyos peasants spilt by the “*vende-patria*” (traitor to the fatherland) government during September and October 2003.⁸⁸ As a result, many in the leadership relate the name to the events of 2003:

After what happened and since 2000, we started to wear [publicly] the red *ponchos*. Now we have this name (...). The red is for revolution. Not to kill or to discriminate, but to demand respect, since we have been cast aside for so many years. (...) We are always fighting, organising ourselves and expressing our rights.⁸⁹

As stated by Daniel Rojas, many leaders recognise an older origin of *ponchos rojos*: Wila Sacu, the nickname of the leader Paulino Quispe, also means red jacket. “We have always been *ponchos rojos*, since there was Wila Sacu before in Achacachi. It was changed to *poncho rojo*”, explains a leader from a community close to Warisata.⁹⁰

In general, people in Omasuyos use the denomination as a synonym for the leaders who are members of the provincial peasant union, which during the past few years included *ponchos rojos* in its name. Despite the complexity of this self-identification, the Bolivian media normally understands them as a simple support group of Evo Morales, a peasant “army” that could be activated against the government’s enemies.⁹¹ The idea of the *ponchos rojos* as a militia was particularly strong during the first years of Morales’ government, when their members declared that they would struggle against the political leaders of the eastern departments of Bolivia, such as Santa Cruz, who showed strong separatist leanings.⁹² Nevertheless, even though many of the *ponchos rojos* had military training in the army during their youth, their weaponry, comprised of old Mausers, heritage of the post-1952 militias or the Chaco War, would hardly pose a serious threat to the Bolivian Armed Forces.

This idea is normally supported by the leaders from Omasuyos, who are proud to be part of a popular “army” that defends Bolivian territory from separatism and the achievements of

⁸⁸ Interview on 20 June 2013. This version coincides with a former interview (on 14 December 2007) with the sociologist Marxa Chavez, who has studied the region in depth, and with an anonymous leader (on 13 April 2008). However, in his hunger strike diary made during 2003, Felipe Quispe already identifies the Aymara peasant leaders of Omasuyos as *ponchos rojos* (Quispe Huanca, 2013, p. 31).

⁸⁹ Felipa Huanca, interview on 1 July 2013.

⁹⁰ Anonymous 9, interview on 11 July 2013.

⁹¹ On the media coverage on *ponchos rojos*, see Poma *et al* (2008, pp. 65–83).

⁹² A famous media episode regarding the *ponchos rojos* was the beheading of dogs as a threat against the political authorities (*prefectos*) of eastern departments, in November 2007.

the Morales government, such as the nationalisation of gas. The relationship with the state, however, is not one of subordination, since, as an organic peasant organisation, the *ponchos rojos* have their own decision forums and joined many social mobilisations that put pressure on the Morales administration.

A vanguard of the “true” Bolivians

Our historical review of the relationship between the Aymara peasants in Omasuyos and the Bolivian state indicates many elements need to be understood in their current political project and leading role. This review is particularly important because of the widespread and inaccurate idea that the Aymara people have had less interaction with the Bolivian state, and are, therefore, more “ethnic” than their Quechua brothers.

Such interpretation derives in part from Rivera’s dichotomisation between Aymara and Quechua populations, where she describes the Aymara population of the La Paz highlands as less incorporated into the “1952 state programme”, with “inter-ethnic frictions” interfering in the relationship between parties and peasant unions. The inhabitants of the highlands would have exercised a continued Indian and Aymara cultural “otherness”, which was both a cause and a consequence of their lack of incorporation. Therefore “the organization of social life in the Altiplano was still strongly linked to the continuation of the Andean community”, and “the complete success of a system of small holders was and continues to be impossible in this region”. According to Rivera, this combination of the maintenance of Indian identity and social organisation with the exclusion suffered despite the 1952 formal incorporation was what created the conditions for the emergence of the Katarista movement in the 1960s and 1970s (1987, pp. 151–152). In contrast, the Quechua peasant population was understood as being more incorporated into the 1952 state because it lived “several centuries of cross-breeding”, experienced greater “geographic and social mobility” and had a relationship with the market that dated back to colonial times. This particular historical experience undermined the maintenance of Indian identity, because it erased “inter-ethnic frictions”, and turned the relationship with the state into a decisive element in moulding Quechua “collective perceptions” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 46;150–151).

Rivera’s dichotomy provides an underlying thesis for the scholars that frame the Omasuyos political project as an autonomist or an Aymara nationalist position, since both interpretations imply a detachment from the Bolivian state. However, an overview of the history of the province reveals enough elements to place the province closer to the Quechua than to the Aymara model. First, the inter-ethnic frictions between tenants and landowners in the

haciendas were probably less intense than those in the Cochabamba valleys. As Albó mentions in his study, given the long-lasting inter-ethnic loyalty attachments, the agrarian reform was undertaken with impressive tranquillity in the region. It was only after the fall of the *haciendas* that communities organised themselves through unions and formed one of the most powerful peasant movements in Bolivia. Second, because of the easy access to La Paz, Omasuyos' population has experienced an intense relationship with colonial and national markets, as well as with colonial and republican urban society. Even after the expansion of the *haciendas*, they were still responsible for the transport of landowners' production to the city, as some testimonies indicate. Finally, the idea that their "collective perceptions" were moulded by their relationship with the state could be equally applied to Omasuyos, since it is a region that has been engaged in the most important events of Bolivian republican life, from the 1870 rebellion against Melgarejo to Saavedra's "sheep of Achacachi" and resistance against dictatorship together with the COB and other left-wing leaders.

What, then, could explain their embrace of *Katarismo* from the 1970s on and the undeniable ethnic character of their current political discourse? The answer to this lies more in their engagement with the Bolivian state, and particularly with the city, than in their alienation and remoteness. If the *hacienda* and the *pongueaje* periods represent an experience of degradation, resistance emerged only when combined with the urban experience, which made the contradictions of the state more visible. For Omasuyos tenants before the 1952 revolution, the city was the place where they would inform themselves of national politics, and it also represented the most degrading aspects of the *pongueaje*: their free service at the landowner's city house and the carrying of products. For Omasuyos peasants, after the revolution, the city was the place where they perceived how much of their former society was still present, since many public spaces were not open to them, a situation that Rivera depicts very well in her account (1987). This urban prejudice was the starting point for the Katarista movement in La Paz, before it started to gain strength in the countryside. It was the proximity to the centre of Bolivian political society during the twentieth century that incited the reaffirmation of Omasuyos ethnic identity.

Another important characteristic of Omasuyos Aymara peasants after the 1952 revolution is that they regained control of local production, transportation and commercialisation of food. The revolution brought deep changes in the region, both in politics – because political power was in the hands of local peasant leaders – and in the economy – because peasant families regained autonomy over their time and could diversify their economic activities. Therefore, they could partially move to the city, commercialise their production there,

or have some family members working in the service or industrial sectors or as seasonal workers in other rural areas.

After the 1964 coup d'état and Barrientos' dictatorship, the political aspirations of the local peasant movement became understandably more limited. From the 1970s until the end of the dictatorships in 1982, the main political authority in Achacachi was the commander of the army barracks in the town (Albó, 1979, p. 116). Only leaders aligned with the regime were accepted and independent peasant leaders were persecuted and exiled. Writing in 1979 during the turbulent period of democratisation which witnessed many coups, Albó considers that the peasant movement of Achacachi suffered from a sort of "dependent pragmatism" and that its links to left-wing parties were only a relationship of convenience:

A characteristic of the peasant movement in Achacachi has been its relationship with the left-wing parties or political groups. However, we cannot observe deep traces of this relationship in the rank-and-file peasant. He has, it is true, more bellicosity than the peasants from other regions; but this characteristic has nothing to do with being left or right-wing. If we can talk about any ideology, or, better said, political attitude, it about a dependent pragmatism. In fact, the peasant is only interested in achieving something, for example, a school, and it does not matter from where he achieves it. He would be open to do carry out contradictory alliances, if need be, in order to achieve what he pursues (Albó, 1979, p. 150).

Even if it is difficult to measure how much of a leadership ideology is shared by its grassroots, Albó's affirmation could hardly be applied to the Omasuyos peasant movement today. Many other Bolivian social movements have established a relationship of "pragmatic dependency" with the state but that has not necessarily stopped them from developing their own ideological leanings.⁹³

The dictatorships had important consequences in moulding the ideological positions of the movement. During this period, the relationship between left-wing leaders from the COB and the Omasuyos peasant leaders intensified and many of them had a socialist political basis.⁹⁴ Socialist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist vocabulary is present even in discourses of the most indianist of the peasant leaders, such as Felipe Quispe and Daniel Rojas, who was part of the first generation of Kataristas.⁹⁵ Zenobia Chura's testimony depicts an intense experience of persecution and the struggle for democracy, within the context of Omasuyos peasant movement during the 1970s and 1980s:

⁹³ One example is El Alto's political pragmatism and clientelism, which did not stop the city's main organisations from engaging in an intense social struggle during 2003 (Lazar, 2008).

⁹⁴ Greg Grandin (2004) and Marc Becker (2008) have found similar relationships between indigenous leaders and the left in Guatemala and Ecuador, respectively.

⁹⁵ Above, Felipe Quispe writes about the anti-capitalist aspect of his struggle in his diary, and Rojas says that the difference between Katarists and the BIC was that the former managed to spread the "revolution" among the rank-and-file.

Genaro Flores was leading the unified confederation (...). And I was there. After some months, there was a coup d'état. Then the leaders [*dirigentes*] were captured, arrested, and sent to... Where were they sent to? There were people who disappeared. The leaders were clandestine, the leaders were not there anymore (...). Then, another coup d'état. And the leaders kept paying for this rotten dish, the indigenous people, everybody. We always have to carry this, we are always guilty according to them. We were persecuted. (...) And 1980, 1982 arrives, democracy comes again, we are shouting "democracy". We start to organise ourselves again (...). The leaders had all disappeared, they were all spread out. It was difficult to find them, to know who was dead, who was alive.⁹⁶

This experience of struggle has deeply marked Chura's generation. The authoritarian apparatus of the dictatorships prohibited peasant self-organisation, so, in order to achieve that, peasant leaders had to learn to struggle among other left-wing social movements for democracy. They called their resistance and the image they had of a better future society, with social equity and no prejudice, a revolution. They also learnt to identify their enemies not only as *q'aras* or *patrones*, but also as a bourgeois class, imperialist nations, transnational companies and neoliberal governments. They have changed and even the most radical indianism from the beginning of the twentieth century includes all these left-wing elements in its political discourse.

These strong ideological positions are what justify their re-positioning during September and October 2003, in a struggle that started with a strong sectoral petition (the CSUTCB 70-topic agreement), which represented peasant dissatisfaction with the government (the "two Bolivias" as a representation of the poor countryside versus the rich city), and ended up being a national consensus against the neoliberal and violent government. Omasuyos leaders embraced the October agenda (non-exportation, nationalisation and industrialisation of gas) and the denunciation of the Sánchez de Lozada government:

In 2000, people asked the government for the development of the communities, equality, and non-discrimination. They asked (...) for health, basic public services. But in 2003, after the deaths and with privatisation at its peak (...), the people only asked for new elections, a new political constitution, and nationalisation of natural resources. And, even if they were given all that, it would not be enough, because they said 'one way or another, we must have another president'.⁹⁷

And, for many activists in Omasuyos, the way to solve these problems was to substitute the neoliberal presidents with an Aymara, as Vicenta Mamani put it: "we must have an Aymara president, to save Bolivia, without selling resources, without plunder".⁹⁸ As described earlier, the peasant movement in Omasuyos sees itself as a national vanguard, not as an isolated political actor. The discourse that pits the poor countryside in opposition to the rich city is not

⁹⁶ Interview on 15 July 2013.

⁹⁷ Eloy Captcha, interview on 3 July 2013.

⁹⁸ Interview on 26 June 2013.

understood as specific to them. Peasants, indigenous, poor people, workers, are all understood as a single collective actor, the “true” Bolivian people, the majority of the country, Qullasuyo Marka, in a formulation that mixes centuries of engagement with the state and ethnic, social and political oppression.

CHAPTER THREE – TUPAC KATARI

This is very personal. One knows the history, who you are, where you come from. For example, Bartolina Sisa and Tupac Katari struggled during difficult times, when there was discrimination, Indian tribute, *pongueaje*. They organised themselves and struggled against the colonial system. But this story has impact today, because one cannot forget it. If you forget it, you're nothing. What are you going to talk about? You're only going to talk about 2003, you see? And 2003 doesn't happen just like that, it comes from those times, from 1781, the military coups, when people came from outside to overthrow the government, when they depended on the United States. (...) These revolutions come from beyond [*allá*], they arrive to us as a chain, little by little. Today, if our grandparents hadn't struggled, Tupac Katari, Bartolina Sisa, my father, my mother, we wouldn't be talking about the process of change [*proceso de cambio*], the plurinational state. It's a journey [*recorrido*] that began in those times.⁹⁹

The past is a precious element that helps people in Omasuyos to define their collective identity as revolutionary Aymara activists. Even though we could argue that memories are crucial elements in any identity, perhaps the particularity of Omasuyos activists is a clear sense of the role played by these stories of the past in their collective action.¹⁰⁰ It is not that actors perceive those stories as being “invented” or “selected”, a mere function of their agency in the present. Rather, they consider their action in the present very important, but this action is understood as a consequence of a past of struggles, as if the present would only comply with the mandate of the past. In her testimony, Felipa Huanca mentions a “chain” of revolutionary activities and memories that that arrived in the present “little by little”. The remembering activity appears, in her words, as a struggle fought intentionally generation by generation.

And Tupac Katari is by far the most important figure to feature within this rebellious identity, as evidenced by his statue in Q'alachaqa hill. From the three regions studied in this research, only the activists from Omasuyos mentioned the hero and his partner, Bartolina Sisa, while explaining the strategies and motivations for their struggle.¹⁰¹ This does not mean that the memory of Katari is not important in other regions of Bolivia. Nicole Fabricant shows in her study how the symbol of Tupac Katari “travelled” with highland migrants to the lowlands and became an important element of collective identity with members of the landless movement (Fabricant, 2012). The difference is that, in the case of Omasuyos, and probably in other highland provinces such as Aroma or Pacajes, Tupac Katari is a symbol of regional identity as a whole; it is merged

⁹⁹ Felipa Huanca, interview on 17 July 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Most collective identities are fuelled by stories from the past and this is particularly important for ethnic identities. See, for example, Anthony D. Smith's concept of ethnicity, whose core comprises “myths, memories, values and symbols”, all of them drawing on a mythical past to explain the singularity of the group in the present (Smith, 1986, p. 16).

¹⁰¹ One activist from El Alto mentioned Katari figuratively when talking about Bolivia's “dismemberment” by the plunder of natural resources and the lawyer of the victims of October, Rogelio Mayta, also talked a lot about the hero when he explained Omasuyos' struggle. More detailed data on the “memory topics” discussed by the activists were presented in the methodological notes.

with the territoriality of the highlands, while within the landless movement in the lowlands, it is a symbol of a region they left, their original home.

The rebellion led by Tupac Katari occurred in 1781, in the provinces of the Bishopric of La Paz (La Paz, Pacajes, Sicasica, Omasuyos, Larecaja and Yungas), and was combined with Tupac Amaru's rebellion in Cuzco region. Katari, who was born in Sicasica province (today Aroma), commanded tens of thousands of Indians and organised a siege of the city of La Paz from March until October 1781. Bartolina Sisa, his wife, performed important commands and organisational tasks, assuming the post of maximum leader of the siege during the occasional absences of Katari (Valle de Siles, 1990, pp. 241–258). Chroniclers of the time stated that around fifteen thousand people died of hunger and disease in La Paz during the siege, more than half of the city's population. The description of hunger is dramatic: people ate cats, dogs, donkeys, all sorts of objects made of animal skin (bags, shoes, trunks), and there are even some stories of cannibalism (Valle de Siles, 1990, pp. 278–279).

In November 1781, Katari was captured some miles away from Achacachi; within a couple of days, he was judged and executed in Peñas. His body was ripped apart by horses, his head was sent to La Paz, while his limbs were taken to the provincial capitals where his struggle had most impact. His right arm was taken to the town of Sicasica; his left arm was taken to Achacachi, in Omasuyos; his right leg was taken to Chulumani, in Yungas; and his left leg was taken to Caquiaviri, in Pacajes (Thomson, 2002, pp. 18–21). Bartolina Sisa was taken captive in the middle of the siege, and was kept imprisoned for more than a year before her execution in September 1782. After being publicly humiliated, she was hung and her head was sent to Sicasica province, her place of origin (Valle de Siles, 1990, pp. 256–258).

These, in a very condensed form, are the main empirical references regarding Katari and Sisa that recent historiography registers. Besides explicitly forming part of the rebellious identity of Aymara activists from Omasuyos, as seen in Felipa Huanca's testimony, the memory of Tupac Katari played a more specific role during the 2003 mobilisation. In this chapter, we will analyse how this story and its main protagonists served as a major narrative, a platform, to express the present situation and the demands of social actors. Some topics, such as indigenous government, martyrdom and return, and territorial control (blockades and siege), were key to make sense of the mobilisation and could be directly related to Katari's story. Following the theoretical pathway discussed in the introduction, after identifying these more "presentist" attachments, we will then explore how Katari's saga travelled through time, from the eighteenth century until today, applying a processual approach, and will finally analyse the elements in the everyday life of Omasuyos people that explain this memory's deep appeal.

Indigenous government

In the last chapter, it was argued that the political project of the Aymara peasants of Omasuyos is closer to a broad indigenous nationalism, which claims a majoritarian Indian feature of Bolivian society, rather than a narrow Aymara nationalism (with separatist intention) or an autonomist position. Thus indigenous self-government in Omasuyos does not generally refer to “communitarian lands of origin” (TCOs, in their Spanish acronym) or indigenous municipalities, institutions recognised by the state in which indigenous people can exercise their autonomy in managing their political, social and cultural affairs.¹⁰² Their self-government would be exercised across the whole national territory, or in their words, the area of the Qullasuyo. Again, the indigenous president appears as a materialisation of that:

Since Tupac Katari we have been saying that we must govern ourselves. Because Qullasuyo is ours, not of the foreigners that have manipulated us. (...) In 2003, the demand of the whole of Bolivia was against selling our natural resources and so all social organisations have united around this. (...) But we have always [claimed] that the Bolivian president should be indigenous, always. Now, we have already achieved it.¹⁰³

In 2003, the claim for self-government was directed against Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, who was seen as a president who would only serve international and minority elite interests. Tupac Katari’s example provided a parallel in which neoliberal governments appear equivalent to the colonial order, and Katari’s demand to expel the Europeans in order to establish indigenous rule in Andean territory continues to be seen as valid. The idea of an indigenous government became more plausible after the Warisata massacre, as the demand for the resignation of Sánchez de Lozada strengthened. One of the sources of this connection between Tupac Katari and the struggle against imperialism (or neoliberalism) is Felipe Quispe’s very popular book on Tupac Katari, published for the first time in 1988:

Our only purpose is to heighten the “Tupakatarist” thought, which tells us to “send all the Europeans on their way, so they may go back to their lands”; for us, those principles are still valid, because we are going to send the *gringo yankees* on their way, so they may leave our lands as we do not tolerate them anymore. Now we can also say “the things that are God’s to God and the things that are Caesar’s to Caesar”, so we can ratify “the things that are of the gringo yankees to the gringo yankees of North America”. We, as followers of Tupac Katari, must put things in their place and we will only achieve that with the use of arms, there is no other solution for the owners and native [*originario*] people of this land and territory (Quispe Huanca, 2007, pp. 58–59).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² TCO means Tierra Comunitaria de Origen. After 2009, with the approval of the new constitution, they started to be called Territorio Indígena Originario Campesino (TIOC).

¹⁰³ Raúl Bautista, interview on 20 June 2013.

¹⁰⁴ The phrase regarding Caesar and God is a New Testament citation and was present in various correspondences of Tupac Katari; see Thomson (2002, pp. 205–206).

Even if Quispe himself does not support Evo Morales, we can imagine the impact of Sánchez de Lozada's escape to the United States followed by the election of Evo Morales two years later on this generation of peasant leaders, whose political formation was based on these comparisons.

Some scholars have interpreted the contemporary legacies of Tupac Katari's struggle by emphasising its political aspects. Sinclair Thomson states that the main long lasting legacy of his struggle was community democracy, based on the *ayllu* organisation, which had not existed before. To support his thesis, Thomson documents the changes in the power structures of the Indian communities throughout the eighteenth century, in a context in which the rebellion of Tupac Katari played a decisive role.¹⁰⁵ However, communal democracy is not normally a value that peasant leaders attach primarily to the figure of Tupac Katari today, even though they are very proud of their mechanisms of political control inside the communities (rotations, assemblies, respect the decision of the rank-and-file, etc.). This shows the need to differentiate between the consequences of certain events and the way people interpret those events today, which are the ideological messages they "learn" from them. As mentioned in the first chapter, this feature of present relevance, in a process in which people interpret and attribute present meaning to events of the past, is what differentiates memory studies from history.

Writing from the perspective of memory studies, Silvia Rivera interprets the legacy of Tupac Katari as an acknowledgment of the continuous colonial situation by contemporary political actors (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987). The way people compare "gringo yankees" to the Spanish colonisers suggests that Rivera's interpretation is valid not only in the Altiplano in general, but also in Omasuyos in particular. However, as discussed earlier, her conception of memory sometimes resembles a "latent memory", some primordial feature that was kept inside people's minds from generation to generation, until it was finally awakened by an unbearable contemporary form of exploitation. In this work, we use a conception of memory that avoids this type of interpretation, considering it is also part of a discursive element of the political actors, who understand their attachment to the past as something unavoidable.

¹⁰⁵ According to Thomson, the strengthening of communal democracy has happened because of the crisis of the *cacicazgo* authority system, in which the colonial state recognised the caciques, hereditary Indian lords, as formal mediators with the Indian rural *ayllus* and communities. During the eighteenth century, this system collapsed because the caciques failed to represent the interests of their communities. Tupac Katari's rebellion was one of the most radical episodes of this crisis, when the caciques supported the colonial state, while the communities joined Katari. In this context, local assemblies and authorities and new leaders during mobilisation, such as Katari himself, appeared increasingly important, redistributing political power on a "rotating, temporary basis" (Thomson, 2002, pp. 273–274).

Martyrdom and return

Continuous ethnic oppression and the colonialism existent in Bolivia are not the only messages people identify in Tupac Katari's struggle. The hero and his partner, Bartolina Sisa, are cited by peasant leaders to illustrate other situations that are related to social struggle but have less obvious political content. Some activists narrate a more intimate perception of the heroes, understood as martyrs, whose life stories of suffering and dedication have many parallels to a religious attachment:

I used to say to the martyrs 'you died for us, this is why we now follow your path'. (...) We cried [and said] 'save us', this is what we asked from her [Bartolina Sisa]. (...) She died for her land, because she was indigenous, she died for us all. As God, God died for us, they say, so in the same way Bartolina Sisa and Tupac Katari died. So we wanted to follow their example.¹⁰⁶

Thus, Katari and Sisa were perceived almost as saints by some activists. Zenobia Chura, who gave the testimony above, mentions praying to Sisa after explaining the hardships of militant life, the lack of financial support for food and travel and how difficult it was to maintain political autonomy from the traditional parties when they could offer them jobs and money.

The activists express a duty to follow the path of Bartolina Sisa, with a strong sense of destiny. As in the Catholic tradition, detachment from one's own life through sacrifice and martyrdom is seen as a moral stance essential to the cause. However, different from that tradition, activists also hold a pragmatic view on life and death: since we are all going to die anyway, we might as well die for something we struggle for.

They were looting Bolivia, all its resources. (...) They've sold gas, petrol, minerals and they wanted to sell more. This is why we were there. We are going to die tomorrow, after tomorrow. So we struggle, as women we struggle. That year we had five women as leaders in Omasuyos. We were strong and young. We were ready to die, we were not afraid. We will die tomorrow, after tomorrow, it's the same thing. We were waiting (...). This is why we have now the *proceso de cambio*, an Aymara president (...).¹⁰⁷

Being a woman also contributes to this sense of destiny, as if providing them with a specific moral strength. The figure of Bartolina Sisa can also be seen as a personification of this ideal of strength and suffering, as seen in Chura's testimony. While talking about Sisa, female

¹⁰⁶ Zenobia Chura, interview on 15 July 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Vicenta Mamani, interview on 27 June 2013. Also from Vicenta: "Así decía el Mallku, ustedes se van a enfermar de la vesícula, cualquier enfermedad te vas a enfermar, en tu casa vas a morir, después tus familias nomás se van a enterar, quién va a respetar. Ahora más bien en la lucha vamos a morir, las gentes todos van a venir entero, con orgullo en la lucha vamos a morir. Así me ha enseñado, pues. Por eso en nuestro corazón, sí de verdad es. Diciendo. A ver, mañana vamos a morir, pasado moriré, a ver qué día moriré, pero en la lucha vamos a morir."

activists show a more intense proximity and identification with her figure than male activists with Tupac Katari. Felipe Quispe was one exception: he wrote a book on Katari's struggle and mentioned that he held a strong sense of identification with the hero.¹⁰⁸ When he talks about the details of Katari's life, he emphasises his radicalism against white people ("he killed more than thirty thousand") and he mentions the fact that Katari had a second relationship after Sisa's imprisonment:

(...) I've read all the books [on Tupac Katari]. I already knew about the siege... that he did not have only one woman, Bartolina was his second wife. And, when they captured Bartolina, when she was arrested, he had another woman, María Lopez. He was arrested with her.¹⁰⁹

Even though Quispe does not talk at length about this topic, his testimony indicates that Katari resembles an ideal of masculinity, radical political activity and sexual conquest, as Bartolina represents an ideal of female strength while bearing the difficulties of life. This representation of the couple in the narratives of contemporary activists supports Marisol de la Cadena's observations that women are understood as more "Indian" than men amongst Andean populations (de la Cadena, 1995). While studying an Andean community in South Peru, de la Cadena identified that when gender was folded into ethnic categories, indigenous "women lose ground" and become the "last chain of social subordination: they are the least ethnically or socially mobile". However, because indigenous identity was actually valued in the Omasuyos context, the perception of being more "Indian" was something that legitimised women as activists and promoters of resistance, not necessarily in a subordinate and passive position. Thus, while Katari is depicted as the victorious side of their struggle, a role very closely related to the white conquerors in popular social imagination, Sisa represents the struggle's aspects of martyrdom and resistance, an experience related to the suffering imposed on colonised populations.

While the protagonists of the struggle are projected in different ways, the image of the rebellion as a whole fosters both the idea of a victorious indigenous power and the idea of a fierce resistance against the current oppressive "colonial" and "neoliberal" political system. This second aspect is only possible if equated with the sentence that oral tradition attributed to Tupac Katari in his final moments: "I shall die, but I shall return tomorrow multiplied ten thousand-fold" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 156). Katari's promise of return is a constitutive

¹⁰⁸ He says: "As a historian, I know his face well. When I saw it, I trembled. I don't know, it's as if he were my family, a part of me". Interview on 18 September 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Interview on 18 September 2013.

element of Indian resistance, even when the idea of a new indigenous political order is not actually a direct demand of a social movement.

Nicole Fabricant has analysed the role played by the symbol of Tupac Katari in the Movimiento Sin Tierra (MST), the landless movement, in the Bolivian lowlands, whose objectives are the redistribution of land and resources to migrant peasants. In her observations, Katari was especially significant in counteracting the violence suffered by migrants from the highlands, particularly leaders of social movements, from the right-wing sectors of Santa Cruz de la Sierra:

I was just walking through the plaza... when all of a sudden, these kids start beating the shit out of me. They were screaming, 'So you are the *machito* [macho man] who is stopping traffic and organizing people. You are the big guy, heh? You're nothing more than a *colla de mierda* [Indian piece of shit]. Your life is worthless.' And they continued to beat me. I said to them, 'Why don't you just take my life... why torture me? It's better to just kill me. That way I will die fighting for what I believe in, like Tupac Katari, I will die fighting for justice.' (MST activist Pablo Mamani, cited in Fabricant, 2012, p. 14).

In this context, Katari appears as a symbol of resistance the same way Sisa appeared in female testimonies from Omasuyos. This is due to the specificities of the political and social context of the lowlands, where episodes of ethnic violence are more common than in the highlands at the moment.¹¹⁰ The references to Katari's death can only be understood, however, if they are taken as a promise of resurrection: "Performing Katari as embodied and resurrected in the millions of landless peasants, MST organizers resignify and reconnect bodies in space – not as broken, beaten up, and fragmented, but rather as collective tools of resistance" (Fabricant, 2012, p. 11).

Many authors have identified resemblances between the Katari saga and the Incarrí myth, which states that the head of the Inca will grow underground and, when the body finishes growing, the Inca will get back to his feet and will rule again over his former territory (Fabricant, 2012, p. 23; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 33). The similarities between the two stories are striking and certainly contribute to an enhanced symbolic strength of Katari. In the 1970s, Rivera interviewed one of the participants in the 1914 Pacajes rebellion, who said that during the struggle, they had searched for Katari's arm in a hill near Caquiaviri, "the epicentre of the border tension between the estate owners and the *ayllus* of Pacajes" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 33). Similarly, in contemporary Omasuyos, people are inspired by these buried remains, as if their

¹¹⁰ In the departments in the Bolivian lowlands, migrants from the highland regions, identified as *collas*, suffer intense discrimination from some local residents, who call themselves *cambas*. Organisations of peasant migrants, such as the MST, are identified as being *collas*, and their leaders have been beaten up by regionalist youth organisations on a couple of occasions. The advent to power of Evo Morales has increased this tension, at least during the first years of his first mandate, because local regionalists, who supported local right-wing parties, accused the migrants of supporting Morales' party and of misrepresenting the region in national elections.

presence would fill them with the leader's strength. Again, the limb is believed to be buried in a hill of symbolic importance, Q'alachaqa, Omasuyos' main blockade node in 2003 and the current place of the Aymara New Year celebration:

Every day we had people there, that's why it's called Q'alachaqa headquarters. And why headquarters? Because it has *camasa*, a courage. There were investigations that said that when they killed Tupac Katari in Peñas, his limbs were distributed and his left hand was brought to Achacachi. According to the history, here in Q'alachaqa there was a cemetery. So Katari's left arm must be buried there, and I believe that this is bringing us strength and encouragement.¹¹¹

Other authors have related Katari to the broader concept of *pachakuti*, which could be literally translated as the "turning of the earth" or "revolution". In this sense, according to Canessa, *pachakuti* could bring the combined idea of Katari's return and a new hegemony of the "values of the earth". As seen in the first chapter, Bouysse-Cassagne and Harris (1987) depict *pachakuti* as a total change of order, related to the underworld, in which the world of the dead and of the past hold the creative forces of the future. Nevertheless, Canessa also identifies similarities between the rhetoric of Katari's return and evangelical announcements that Jesus is alive and is returning (Canessa, 2000, pp. 125–126). Thus, the idea of the return of Katari incorporates Andean and Western traditions from different periods of time. It draws its forces from traditions of martyrdoms and resistance but also from particular notions of temporality that understand the world beneath the surface as a creative force. This more evocative and symbolic aspect of Katari and Sisa's struggle has as much political significance and impact as the ideological projects, such as Indian self-government, also closely related to their story.

Siege and blockades

One further aspect of Katari's image in contemporary Omasuyos needs particular attention. Many peasant leaders especially remember Tupac Katari when describing their tactics during the road blockades and their marches to the city of La Paz. The road blockades, which isolated the city of La Paz and restricted its access to food and other products, were the main and most effective peasant mobilisation tactic during 2003 and they forced the government to act.

As a contemporary tactic, the peasant blockades replaced the strikes against the landowners that were common in the first half of the twentieth century. The first blockades occurred in Achacachi as early as the 1950s, just after the National Revolution. It was only in the

¹¹¹ Eloy Captcha, interview on 3 July 2013.

1970s, with the road blockades in Caranavi, that “they finally crystallised as the new struggle strategy peasant movements adopted after the Agrarian Reform” (Hurtado, 1986, p. 239). They were first used strategically in 1974, when peasant movements in the valleys of Cochabamba mobilised against the rise of living costs caused by governmental measures, which increased the price of non-peasant staples (sugar, bread, coffee, noodles, rice) and the devaluation of the currency (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 120).¹¹² Banzer’s dictatorship reacted violently against the blockades and caused around 80 casualties while the army cleared the roads by force, in an event later known as the “Tolata Massacre” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 121–122).¹¹³ The road blockades appeared once again in November and December 1979, when the recently founded CSUTCB organised a national peasant blockade to resist Natusch Busch’s short coup d’état and the devaluation policy of the following government of Lidia Gueiler, which once again affected the living costs of the peasant population (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, pp. 140–141). On this occasion, the blockades were nationwide and paralysed many departments for two weeks.¹¹⁴

The blockades appeared again during the coca-growers’ resistance against the eradication of the coca leaf in the Chapare region and during the mobilisations regarding the promotion and, later on, the reform of the agrarian law in the 1990s. The immediate precedent of the blockades in 2003 was, though, a radical national peasant blockade that happened in September 2000 and which isolated the main cities, especially La Paz, for a couple of weeks, and forced the government to deliver food by air (García Linera et al., 2008, p. 123). Saturnino Rojas, a leader during the mobilisations in 2003, outlines the objectives of the blockades and their historical contextualisation:

During this period, the blockades were directed to cut the city’s food, because we said clearly that it was a blockade of agricultural and livestock products, all the products that entered from the countryside to the city. This automatically affected the markets, so people were trying to irritate the government. Then, the government doesn’t like it, because the markets are empty, people would struggle to have any food, so the government felt the pressure to answer the demands. Not only during those years, but also during the 1960s and 1970s, during Barrientos, Banzer. So this is a way to continue the historical struggle of the peasantry. (...) Before, there were no blockades, because there were no roads. People moved around with animals, donkeys, there was no way of blocking. But since transportation was established, (...) then it was used.¹¹⁵

The connection with the recent period of struggle that Saturnino Rojas establishes, however, is not the way the peasant leadership in Omasuyos normally interprets the blockade

¹¹² These staples were either imported from other countries or produced by the agroindustry of the lowlands in Bolivia. They are not typical products of the highlands.

¹¹³ This episode marked the end of the Military-Peasant Pact, as indicated previously.

¹¹⁴ Javier Hurtado offers a detailed account on the peasant mobilisation of November and December 1979 (1986, pp. 148–218).

¹¹⁵ Interview on 26 June 2013.

strategy. They go far back in history and explain the idea of affecting the food supply in La Paz through the siege of Tupac Katari in the eighteenth century. Raúl Bautista, a current leader in the provincial union, who participated as a rank-and-file activist in the 2003 mobilisations, explains that, in the beginning, the identification with Katari's struggle was not very intense. It was only after the government opened fire against the peasants in Warisata on 20 September 2003 that the blockades intensified and people were not allowed to take any food to La Paz:

During this time, people could at least take food on bicycles, on motorcycles, to the city of La Paz. After that happened [Warisata] the blockade was radicalised and not even comrades that wanted to take some products to La Paz were allowed to pass. The products were immediately taken. The idea was to do as our grandparent Tupac Katari did: to besiege La Paz. We did not want to besiege it, we just wanted to leave La Paz and El Alto without food, so people there could also rise against the government. (...) So, many of our relatives suffered a lot. Since then, things became more radical. This has been the biggest rebellion in recent years, this year of 2003".¹¹⁶

The radicalism which recalls the image of Tupac Katari and Bartolina Sisa can also be noted in many women's testimonies of the blockades, in which the experience of state violence can also be noted. A provincial leader of the peasant women's organisation, who also participated in the struggles during 2003, evokes a sense of an unequal relationship between state and peasants, city and country, which required radical action:

Before, when Tupac Katari and Bartolina Sisa mobilised, there was a siege of La Paz. With this mentality we wanted to carry out a siege, in order to stop our products from coming in. (...) at that moment there was no cheese, no products from us, they were not brought here [in La Paz] to be sold. People eat them and after, they criticise us, kill us, and discriminate against us. This is why we blocked, why there was conflict. But they had guns and we didn't, we had slings [*hondas*, *k'orawas*] sticks [*palos*], this is how we defended ourselves.¹¹⁷

Another former leader from Omasuyos' peasant women's organisation is more radical in her statements regarding the blockades and the withdrawal of the food supply to La Paz. She uses the term *q'ara* to depict the city's inhabitants:

We said 'we won't let in any product, nothing, nothing, we will let the *q'aras* die'. We took this decision, no vegetables, no dry products, nothing should come in, no vehicles would pass through the road. This was our decision. Before, Tupac Katari and Bartolina Sisa had carried out a paralysis, blockades of products. We had the same idea, this idea that our grandparents have left us. (...) Before, people say, they would eat their grandsons, their dogs, their sons, their leather. We could do the same, we could sustain the blockades for three months, even for a whole year.¹¹⁸

Despite the passion of such statements, activists recognised the specificity of the contemporary cities of La Paz and El Alto. A major Aymara peasant leader in 2003 describes the

¹¹⁶ Interview on 20 June 2013.

¹¹⁷ Anonymous 7, interview on 9 July 2013.

¹¹⁸ Anonymous 1, interview on 23 June 2013.

strategy of the blockades, noting the difference between the present inhabitants of the city and the way he imagines it was during the siege of the eighteenth century:

The strategy of the provinces was above all to besiege the city of La Paz (...) with the blockades, as the Tupac Katari's siege. We had everything prepared, we had selected the older, more tired people to go marching through the road and the young to go through the other side, to besiege La Paz. Then, since our people, the Aymara and Quechua, also live in the city, it isn't as it was before, in Tupac Katari's times, when only Spanish lived in the city of La Paz. (...) We had to be careful and besiege the city quickly. Then it was more serious, we had more conflict, every day the problem would grow bigger. (...) Then Goni [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada] had escaped, because the people could not bear it anymore, the conflict was terrible, the whole country was exploding.¹¹⁹

These testimonies depict the significance of the siege Katari and Sisa led more than two hundred years ago to contemporary Aymara peasant activists understanding their own strategies of struggle. The road blockades are not only a tactic of the highland Aymara peasant population; blockades are also used by other social actors in different geographical contexts. In El Alto, during the same process of struggle in September and October 2003, activists promoted blockades of streets and access points of the city that caused economic losses and shortages of petrol in the city of La Paz. In Potosí in August 2010, activists also deployed road blockades as a way to affect the national economy, by interrupting the transport of minerals and the exports of the region. Besides the Aymara peasants from Omasuyos, none of the other activists interviewed (in El Alto, Potosí or Coroma) mentioned Tupac Katari to explain the strategy of the blockades.

The dichotomy between the poor countryside and the rich urban city identified in the political discourses presented in the last chapter appears again in this recovery of Katari's struggle during the road blockades. The siege is the materialisation of this dichotomy; it represents the inversion of territorial power, a moment in which inequalities become more visible and the majority of the country imposes its strength.

Remembering and learning

As seen at the start of this chapter, remembering the struggles and heroes of the past, seen as ancestors, has been centrally important to strengthening collective identities, and this has been a conscious activity, at least for national leaders such as Felipa Huanca. She mentions

¹¹⁹ Anonymous 3, interview on 3 July 2014.

a “chain” that arrives in the present “little by little”, as stories regarding Katari and Sisa have always been present in oral history tradition, from the eighteenth century up to today.

To understand this intimate relationship of contemporary peasant activists with Katari and Sisa only as a result of oral storytelling, in which their saga was passed from generation to generation until the present day is, however, deceptive. According the majority of the interviewees, their first contact with the heroes’ saga was only some decades ago, in the 1970s and 1980s, in workshops offered by the peasant unions and NGOs, a period that corresponds with the emergence of the Katarista movement. Zenobia Chura reports that she first heard of Bartolina Sisa and Tupac Katari during the 1970s, when she was in her twenties:

Then we went to the city one day, the departmental federation calls all the unions for a seminar. I went to this seminar, and there they tell us all the stories of the martyrs that have died. (...) I found out about them there. In school, we heard nothing of Tupac Katari, nothing of Bartolina Sisa, they don’t tell us about them. There, they told us. It was to mourn, always. So many things Bartolina has endured, this time I wanted the organisation. How was it possible, so much [suffering]? (...) There, they told us where Bartolina came from, her community, her province; all these things they told us. (...) Then, I wanted to know more about her, I asked and arrived in this province.¹²⁰

Chura also says that her knowledge of the heroes did not come from her family: “Perhaps my dad knew something, but my mother didn’t know, (...) she did not say anything to me”. Even Felipa Huanca, who mentioned the “chain” connecting past events and the present, had her first contact with the stories of Katari and Sisa in the union, not through her family or school:

This is a hidden story, they don’t teach it in schools because it’s forbidden. They only teach about Simón Bolívar, Antónío José de Sucre, Pedro Domingo Murillo. Because it’s not convenient for the colonialists, republicans, neo-colonialists, that we know this story of Bartolina and Tupac Katari. (...) With my dad I learnt to respect children, elders, Mother Earth. During seedtime we have to do the *k’oacha* [offering to Pachamama], during harvest we have to give thanks, this is what I have learnt. We have to pray, since the Catholic Church was dominant as well. You have to learn Our Father, you have to pray Hail Mary (...). But sometimes this would mix with our cosmovision (...). Then, I had learnt of it [Sisa and Katari’s struggle] here, in the union organisation.¹²¹

Felipe Quispe tells a different story of his first contact with the Tupac Katari saga, which relates more to a personal quest for knowledge. He was one of the first students of rural schooling after the 1952 revolution and the Agrarian Reform and he first remembers seeing a picture in his teacher’s house depicting Katari’s execution when he was a child: “There was a small picture there, and [Katari] was being quartered, pulled, his hair all shaved. I read there, I

¹²⁰ Interview on 15 July 2013.

¹²¹ Interview on 17 July 2013.

already knew how to read: the death of Tupac Katari. Since then I have known about him”.¹²² After being in the army, Quispe became interested in communism and Marxism, since the higher commanders in the army spoke badly of those ideologies. Amongst this literature, he also found books on Tupac Katari and got to know the hero’s story in depth, through the literature available in the 1970s:

Then I leave the army and the first thing I do is to buy books here [in La Paz]. Above San Francisco [square], there were people selling second hand books. It said there ‘Communist Party’ (...), ‘The Manifest of the Communist Party’. I bought it, the price didn’t matter. (...) I didn’t find there that they would kill me, they would take my lands. There wasn’t such a thing. It was a lie by the military that wanted us to be reactionary. This is how I’ve known of Katari, I’ve started to buy the books of Fausto Reinaga. There he speaks of Katari, of a lot of things, of Tomás Katari. This was already the 1970s. But I did not go deep. I bought the book of Alipio Valencia, who talked about Katari, but it was a sort of novel. Then Augusto Guzmán, another author of Katari. Zacarías Monje, who has called Katari Sucasu Mallcu (...). This is how I have become Tupaj Katarist. (...) Reading, reading since I was very young.^{123 124}

Quispe emphasises his process of self-knowledge and his conscious election of the “Tupac Katarist” ideology, even when he recognises that his learning of Tupac Katari happened within the context of socialist ideology. He also states that his older brother used to talk about the hero, since he had studied in clandestine rural schools in Omasuyos province before the 1952 revolution. His testimony illustrates a generation gap between the first Katarista leaders, such as Quispe, and the previous generation that lived and promoted the Agrarian Reform in the highlands of La Paz, of which Quispe’s brother was probably part.

Younger Aymara activists have a different experience with Katari and Sisa’s story. They have already heard about the heroes in school and, being part of a new generation of school teachers themselves, they are now able to teach students about the Aymara martyrs. In this regard, they are a third generation that is constantly influenced by their image in Omasuyos province, different from the first generation of Katarists, such as Quispe, who had learnt about them alone or with their relatives, or a second generation that had learnt in the peasant union’s seminars. Raúl Bautista, who was in his twenties during 2003, exemplifies this generation:

I first heard [of Katari] in my last years of high school, but the teachers there almost didn’t talk about him. Since then, a lot has changed in this area. Now we speak of Tupac Katari. For example, I’m a teacher and we explain to our children who Tupac Katari was, who Bartolina Sisa was, what

¹²² Interview on 18 September 2013.

¹²³ Interview on 18 September 2013.

¹²⁴ Tomás Katari was the leader of a rebellion in the region of Chayanta, North Potosí, at the end of the eighteenth century and was assassinated only a couple of months before Tupac Katari started his siege of La Paz. For more information on his rebellion, see Thomson (2002, pp. 164–166). Tupac Katari combined his name with “Tupac Amaru” to form his own, conjugating the symbolic strength of both leaders.

they did for us. But before, this was a restricted topic, the teachers would not talk about that. Perhaps they were not allowed to.¹²⁵

All these testimonies suggest multiple ways in which the story of Tupac Katari started to be a central symbolic reference for the peasant movement in Omasuyos in the last decades of the twentieth century. The political formation promoted by the peasant unions during the 1970s and 1980s, the period Katarismo emerged, was a key factor to enlarge and cohere the memory and the narratives of the heroes. Community traditions of oral storytelling regarding the heroes also existed but they probably represented a minority of cases.

From Katari to Katarista

Even though Tupac Katari only became a leading symbol in a political struggle with the Katarista movement in the 1970s, his story had been kept in oral storytelling traditions and in written records over two centuries. This section explores how the story of Katari was kept through time, analysing its multiple historical interpretations up until it became a positive symbol of indigenous autonomous and rebellious character at the end of the twentieth century.

Some contemporary authors state that the memory of his rebellion was still fresh when the independence struggles occurred, at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Hylton, 2010, pp. 43–44; Larson, 2004, p. 36). Their claim is sustained by Pentland's report in 1826, which briefly mentions the siege when describing the city of La Paz: "La Paz suffered severely in 1789 [*sic*] during the insurrection of the indigenous population, which – led by Tupac Amaru and Tupac Catari – sieged the city in vain during many months" (1975, p. 45).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Manuel Rigoberto Paredes was one of the first to dedicate a monograph to the figure of the hero and the insurgency. *Tupac Catari: apuntes biográficos* was first published in 1897 and republished in 1973. Paredes uses sources such as Sebastián Seguro's diary of the siege and Katari's letters, which he had accessed through a private collection of manuscripts (Paredes, 1973).¹²⁶ He was the precursor of what Thomson called a "*paceñista* urban history", which "attempts to honour the heroes and martyrs of both camps", recognising the oppression Indian people withstood under colonial rule, but also the suffering of the Creole population during the siege (Thomson, 2002, p. 185). Before the work of Paredes, Seguro's diary had been published in a collection of historical documents organised

¹²⁵ Interview on 20 June 2013.

¹²⁶ Sebastián Seguro was the colonial authority responsible for organising the defence of the city of La Paz during the siege.

by Vicente de Ballivian y Roxas (1872). Later, in 1879, José Rosendo Gutiérrez published a collection of many other diaries of the siege.¹²⁷ Nicanor Aranzaes wrote entries for Katari and Segurola in his *Diccionario Histórico del Departamento de La Paz*, published in 1915 (36-43; 716-721), depicting Katari from a more negative perspective (“he had bad instincts” and was “lewd”) than Paredes.

Even though Katari’s struggle was present in academic works, there were no direct references to it during Indian struggles in the nineteenth century. In the Peñas trial after the 1899 Federal War, his name was only indirectly cited by one of the Creole prosecutors, who mentioned Tupac Amaru and “other indigenous leaders” as inspirations for the revolt (Kuenzli, 2013, p. 18).

This panorama changed in the twentieth century, when academics managed to collect some references to the hero, mainly due to the work of historians engaged in an alternative and subaltern perspective of history (with extensive use of oral-history methodologies), such as Silvia Rivera and the THOA group. They interviewed participants of the struggles that happened at the beginning of the century and Katari’s struggle was directly recalled by them. As mentioned before, Rivera interviewed a participant of the 1914 Pacajes rebellion who remembered that during those days they looked for the amputated arm of Tupac Katari on a hill near Caquiaviri. The movement of the *caciques apoderados*, which was active during the first half of the twentieth century across all of the highlands, was also inspired by Katari:

‘There have to be schools. We have to stop being slaves. They have to stop imprisoning us. In the ancient [land] titles it says that the Indian is free’... We found documents with that content.... We also talked about Tupaj Katari: ‘Tupaj Katari rose up against the Spaniards, since the Spaniards wanted to eliminate Indians at any cost. That’s why Tupaj Katari rose up against Spaniards, to defend himself, and that’s why the Spaniards killed him,’ they said. ‘That’s why we have to struggle.’ (Ticona and Chura cited in Hylton 2010, p. 297).

Academic works on Tupac Katari multiplied around the middle of the century, perhaps reflecting the deep changes Bolivian society went through after the Chaco War (1932-1935). In 1942, Zacarías Monje Ortiz published *Sucasuca Mallcu*, a historical account of the rebellion that identified Katari as an American “proto martyr”, who fought for the liberation of Indians, *mestizos* and creoles from the European conquerors (Monje Ortiz, 1942, p. 44). Along the same lines, Enrique Finot included Katari as a precursor of the independence struggles (Finot, 1946, p. 130), likening him to the national heroes. Another influential book was Alipio Valencia Vega’s *Julián Tupaj Katari. Caudillo de la Liberación India* (1950). The commemorative volumes *La Paz*

¹²⁷ On the specific bibliography published on the events of 1781 during the nineteenth century see Costa de la Torre (1974, p. 128-137).

en su IV Centenario, 1548-1948, edited by a committee responsible for the celebrations of the city's 400th anniversary, include a description of the siege and offer brief biographies of Katari and Sisa in their section on "notable citizens" (*ciudadanos ilustres*).¹²⁸

After the 1952 revolution, Tupac Katari became a widely known historical figure within intellectual circles and the MNR founded a university which they baptised with his name in 1954 (Albó, 1979, p. 51).¹²⁹ However, Thomson is accurate when he notes that, in comparison to Tupac Amaru, Katari "has never fit so neatly within the Bolivian nationalist pantheon" (Thomson, 2002, p. 185). It was only after the emergence of the Katarista movement in the 1970s that Katari was established as strong political symbol for a considerable part of Bolivian society, particularly in the highland area.

Meanwhile, many literary representations of the rebellion appeared before and after the 1952 revolution, such as *Tupaj Katari* by Augusto Guzmán ([1942]2003), the novels *Historia del Rey Chiquito* (1963) and *Tupac Katari, la sierpe* (1964) both by Porfirio Díaz Machicao and the play *La lanza capitana* by Raúl Botelho Gosálvez (1967). These works certainly influenced the political imagination of a new generation of young Aymara migrants in urban spaces during the second half of the twentieth century.¹³⁰

As seen in the previous chapter, the Katarista movement emerged in the city of La Paz in the 1960s, its major protagonists being migrant students from Aroma province who later returned to their communities and started a peasant movement based on political autonomy and the defence of Aymara and indigenous culture (Hurtado, 1986; Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987). According to Javier Hurtado, the specific reference to Tupac Katari at the beginning of the movement was not directly due to communitarian oral storytelling (supporting the evidence found by this research), but to the influence of the writings of Fausto Reinaga among this generation of young Aymaras:

(...) In many interviews with both leaders and rank-and-file militants of Katarism, we find that, during the 1960s, when the movement started in Aroma, the majority of the zone's inhabitants, most of them young people, did not know a thing about Tupaj Katari, or, when they knew something, the things they knew had no current historical or political value. In the best case, the old people had some memory, but it was not from them that the collective memory emerged. On the contrary, the Katarista movement was a movement from the young, from the sons of the revolution that to some extent struggled against the old generations that had served previously

¹²⁸ See the second volume on the history of the city (Comité Pró-IV Centenario de la Fundación de La Paz, 1948).

¹²⁹ The experience did not last long, since the university had already disappeared by the end of the 1970s (Albó, 1979, p. 123). In 2008, a new public university called Tupak Katari was inaugurated in Omasuyos province, as a national policy to "decolonise" education and create incentives for the production of knowledge in indigenous languages.

¹³⁰ Such as Felipe Quispe, who cites the works of Alipio Valencia Vega, Zacarías Monje Ortíz and Augusto Guzmán as being part of his readings on Tupac Katari during the 1970s. Interview on 18 September 2013.

the *haciendas*, and after, the MNR. The young Aymaras rediscovered Tupaj Katari and an idealised and distorted vision of their past through urban influences outside their rural context [*pueblo*]. On one hand, as we mentioned, there was Fausto Reinaga. The main propellers of the movement, with the exception of Jenaro Flores, were part of Reinaga's PIB [Indian Party of Bolivia], and all of them have read his books, which are still a source of inspiration today" (Hurtado, 1986, p. 230).

Fausto Reinaga, whose work is also cited by Felipe Quispe, seems to be the first to actively combine the image of Tupac Katari with a conscious political struggle. In 1962, he created the Party of Aymaras and Quechuas (PIAK) in Peñas, on 15 November, the same day Tupac Katari suffered his death sentence in that locality (Reinaga, 1970, p. 105-106).¹³¹ As Hurtado states, most of the future Katarista leaders had joined Reinaga's second party experience, the Indian Party of Bolivia (PIB), in the 1960s. Later, they followed a different path and formed their own Katarista organisations and parties, such as the MITKA and the MRTKA.¹³²

By the middle of the 1970s, Katari was already a very popular symbol, supported by the Katarista movement and by state institutions (at least during the brief popular governments of Alfredo Ovando and Juan José Torres, between 1969 and 1971). In 1970, a commemorative monument of Tupac Katari was inaugurated in Ayo Ayo in the presence of President Torres and Katarista militants, in an impressively large meeting. The government distributed many Bolivian flags illustrated with the inscription of Tupac Katari (Hurtado, 1986, p. 38). In 1976, a radio programme based on Katari's life was broadcasted in Aymara. However, by that time, the Banzer

¹³¹ See the founding act of the PIAK: "In Penas, at twelve o'clock on the fifteenth of November, 1962 - in the same place as 181 years before (15 November, 1781), Tupac Katari was quartered - we swear to avenge his blood, to carry through his work to liberate the Indian race. And with this goal, we established the PIAK (Party of Aymara Indians and Keswas) - an ideological, political, and military tool intended to defeat our secular enemy, the *cholaje* [acculturation of Indian people]. This will lead to the miracle of rebirth of the millennial kolla-inca culture, which, while assimilating intuitively (...) the universal and humanist inheritance, will open up all possibilities for the innate power of our blood and our soul, for the good of the Qullasuyu fatherland, for America and for the world. PIAK's supreme goal is power. Power, by democratic means, or through the strength of revolution. In order to achieve this end, we will spare no sacrifice, including our own lives. With the blessing of INTI and PACHAMAMA, our Eternal Gods, with our praying soul, with eyes clouded with tears, and our heart yelling "Justice!" and at the foot of our snow-covered Illampu, Illimani, Sajama, Huayna Potosi; under the watchful guardian eye of the Spirit of our race; in the face of the barbaric quartering by four horses of the Martyr of our Freedom, TUPAC KATARI; on our knees and with our own blood we sign and seal the Act of Establishment of PIAK, which is the cornerstone of the retaking of our freedom and our homeland: the homeland of the Indian and for the Indian. Amen (signatures)" (Reinaga, 1970, pp. 105-106).

¹³² Both the Movimiento Indio Tupaj Katari (MITKA) and Movimiento Revolucionario Tupaj Katari (MRTK) have their roots in the emerging *katarismo* of the 1960s. While the first emphasised the ethnic content of the Indian struggle, the second also paid attention to specific issues of the peasantry, with a more classist and nationalist perspective (Hurtado, 1986, p. 33).

dictatorship had already banished the hero from the state's official ideology, associating it with subversion and an independent peasant movement (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1987, p. 126).

From the 1970s onwards, academic works on Tupac Katari proliferated, with studies by Teodosio Imaña Castro, Arturo Costa de la Torre, Alberto Crespo Rodas, and Marcelo Grondin.¹³³ In the work of Maria Eugenia del Valle de Siles (1980, 1990) and Sinclair Thomson (2002), the rebellion was the object of detailed historical research and precise political contextualisation. Katari returned to official discourse after Morales' election in 2005. The new president mentioned the hero many times in his speeches and the new constitution, approved in 2009, recognised the *wiphala* (the coloured flag that represents the Qullasuyo) as a national symbol (Article 6).¹³⁴

As we have seen, the image of Katari "travelled" to current times in different ways. It was certainly present in a fading tradition of oral history up until it was combined with a strong, militant and idealist vision of the hero represented by a more literary tradition, which became politicised by Reinaga. The impressive popularisation of Katari in the late decades of the twentieth century, however, is not only due to the hard work of Katarista militants. It is also because his story illustrates many central issues for the contemporary peasantry, particularly the long-standing tension between urban space and the countryside, translated not only into the tactics of struggle by sieging and blocking roads, but also into everyday experiences.

Food production and market experience

People did not respect us, the indigenous people in the city. "Oh, this Indian, this dirty woman", they cleaned themselves when they approached us. This was how things were in the city. (...) They showed disgust when they were close to us, it was always very extreme. (...) And I perceived it quite well, because I take the best sheep meat to sell [in the cities], to make money out of it. Potatoes, the best ones are for selling. I eat only the meat I cannot sell. Then I do it and they despise me, they discriminate against me. This is not right, you see? (...) It's because the city people are like this, discriminatory. We didn't like this. I take [my products] to the city to them, they don't work, I take only the best things to sell. And they don't respect me (...). There must be respect, I'll respect him, he must respect me. I'm also a worker, I don't depend on them. They don't feed me. (...) We always had to greet them taking off our hats (...). I don't know exactly why, but it left my heart in anger.¹³⁵

¹³³ For a complete reference of these studies, see Thomson (2002, pp. 357–360).

¹³⁴ In 2006 Morales, announcing his policies for an "Agrarian Revolution", remembered Tupac Katari in Peñas, the place of his death, in a ceremony in which he donated 150 tractors. Fabricant (2012) denounces Morales' use of Tupac Katari's image as a "cultural 'show'", appropriating social movements' symbols for state-making agendas.

¹³⁵ Zenobia Chura, interview on 15 July 2013.

Zenobia Chura's testimony is not directly related to Tupac Katari, but it depicts the emotional perception of the socio-economic peasant reality that was a condition for the flourishing of Tupac Katari as a powerful collective memory in Omasuyos. She talks about the daily forms of prejudice peasant people, and particularly women, suffered in their constant travels to the city to sell their products.

There is an underlying concept expressed in her emphasis on the importance of her work and her independence from the city people in contrast with their dependence on her. When she says "they don't work", she has a very specific idea of work in mind: agricultural work, the production of food. Her testimony is structured through the concept of *q'ara*, which means naked, parasite and anti-social, and is commonly used to refer to the white and *mestizo* people (non-indigenous), city or town residents (Platt, 1987, p. 124). According to Thomson, the term was widely employed in the eighteenth century, during the rebellion of Tupac Katari in La Paz and also in a previous rebellion in Oruro. It is a leader from this rebellion who states the following:

(...) the time had come for the relief of Indians and the annihilation of Spaniards and creoles whom they call "*q'aras*," which in their language means "naked," because without paying taxes or laboring they were the owners of what they [the Indians] worked on, under the yoke and burdened with many obligations. They obtained the benefits, while the Indians spent their lives oppressed, knocked about, and in utter misfortune (Thomson, 2002, p. 216).

The current validity of the concept *q'ara* in contemporary Bolivian society depicts a very specific way in which long-standing oppressive social relations are perceived by the Aymara peasantry. *Q'aras* are despicable, not only because they took indigenous lands and killed the Inca rulers, but also because they were unable to produce food and, therefore, were dependent on the peasant workforce for all their activities.¹³⁶ Here lies their antisocial nature, since the cornerstone of Andean social organisation is management of the mountainous lands to produce food; to cite Olivia Harris, "to make the earth bear fruit" (2000).

On the other hand, Chura does not deny the importance of money. She defends the argument that the person who holds the money and the person who sells the food product should be equals; it is unacceptable that the food seller is considered inferior in this relationship. While studying a popular market (*feria*) in Tapacarí, Brooke Larson and Rosario León explain similar moral requirements that local peasants applied to this space:

"Peasants themselves participate in the markets as both small-scale sellers and buyers of subsistence goods, and even where they engage in monetary transaction with itinerant traders,

¹³⁶ For an account that mentions the *q'aras* as the Spaniards who were sent by the devil and killed the Incas, see THOA and Rivera Cusicanqui (1990, p. 171).

they have imposed the ethical “rules of the game” within which trade and negotiation take place. At base, the socially defined purpose of trade is the circulation of subsistence goods and the maintenance of the basic social referents of the “equitable exchange.” In their trading interactions with the itinerant *vallunos* (traders of the valley), the highland peoples of Tapacará have experienced a long-term decline in the mercantile value of their staple products, as have most highland peasants throughout Bolivia. They have found themselves increasingly marginalized as suppliers of urban markets over the past century. But the local cultural norms of exchange in these ferias provide a small measure of defense against the secular decline of agricultural prices. The feria provides an informal political and moral forum for the peasant participants to monitor, discipline, and sometimes censor the economic behaviour and practices of itinerant traders (Larson & León, 1995, p. 245).”

Being in an urban space, Chura was more subject to market forces and could not impose rules of equitable relationship between peasant and buyer. Since colonial times, Andean people have participated in many market activities, selling and trading their products, as partners in colonial enterprises, controlling the transport of the main colonial products such as silver and coca leaves in their llama caravans. As Steve Stern put it, they did not resist the market as such: “one might say with greater truth that Andean people frequently *initiated* marketplace participation, on their own terms if possible, in order to resist market participation under less favourable circumstances” (Stern, 1995, p. 77). This was a situation that extended until the eighteenth century and Tupac Katari himself was a small trader of textiles and coca leaves. As seen in the former chapter, this situation changed after the expansion of the *haciendas* and the implementation of the railways, when the commercial and trading activities of the Indian population became more restricted. However, they still comprised the agricultural workforce, both as free Indians living in communities and as *yanaconas* under the tutelage of the landowner. In post-1952 national society, the Indians, now called *campesinos*, returned to the markets to sell their products by themselves but the multiple crises highland subsistence agriculture went through over the following decades meant that this participation in the markets became “defensive, a symptom of crisis rather than of economic strength” (Harris, 1995, p. 371). As indicated in the first chapter, their main struggle was now to secure “fair prices” for their products.

The market appears in present times as this space where longstanding relationships – regarding who the Indian people are and what sort of activities they do – are reproduced. According to Harris, Bolivian ethnic differentiation itself is closely related to the “unequal terms on which indigenous Andean populations so often entered – and still do – into market relations with others” (Harris, 1995, p. 352). In the contemporary market, Indian identity is informed by the production of food but when Indians increase their participation in the market and abandon many of their “moral requirements” related to the reality of the peasant economy, they

approach a *mestizo* identity (Harris, 1995, p. 364). *Q'ara* represents the extreme of this detachment from the rural world.

The geography of Tupac Katari

This chapter explored the ways in which Tupac Katari is perceived by contemporary peasant militants in Omasuyos. First, we identified three forms in which the hero appears in their discourse: to depict a long-standing struggle for indigenous government; to express a sense of suffering, sacrifice and belief in political overturn, translated into the idea of his prophetic return; and to illustrate the main tactic of struggle in 2003: the road blockade.

Next, we investigated how the story of Katari “travelled” from the eighteenth century down to today. The starting point was the testimonies of the activists, most of whom learnt of him in union political activities, although oral storytelling played a secondary role. The historical review of oral and written narrative references to him helped us to understand how this mixture of oral history, intellectuals and new generations gave birth to the recovery of his image in the second half of the twentieth century. However, this processual approach alone, which suggests that the memory was mainly recovered by an intellectual movement from the 1960s on, does not explain the powerful effect of Katari among Aymara activists. In the last section, thus, we moved beyond these more direct references and explored how his memory was able to take root in everyday aspects of the social actors’ lives. Political concepts such as *q'ara* and long-standing relationships with food and the market played an important role in this sense. A similar role was played by religious traditions depicting martyrdom and return.

While the market was the everyday space where ethnic identities and relations were constructed, the constant economic pilgrimage between city and countryside also informed a perception of space that embodied imbalances. As identified in the previous chapter, the antagonism between city and countryside was an element that cross-cut most of these themes. That spatial representation of ethnic and class antagonisms is vividly illustrated by Katari’s siege of La Paz. His story depicts the need for power inversion, for imposing an Indian notion of space and time.

We started this chapter with the testimony of Felipa Huanca, who said that without memory, they would be “nothing”. Harris once argued that the essence of the *mestizo* identity is only negative: it means to be non-indigenous, anti-ethnic, to have a stake in individualism rather than in community. The process of *mestizaje* is a process of forgetting, of denying one’s origins (Harris, 1995, pp. 359–373). Huanca’s fear can now be examined through other lenses: she struggles to still exist in Bolivian society on her own terms.

This appeal to memory is not only depicted by the recalling of Tupac Katari but by the activity of struggle itself. While talking about processes of forgetting in modernity, Connerton denounces the geography of the big city, which does not show spatial cohesion and, thus, affects the ability of its inhabitants to establish a system of memorialisation within its territory. Besides, the evolution in transportation radically changed the way people related to space: “the modern cultural landscape” became places of flow instead of places of settlement; their classic depiction is the highways. According to him, the process of capitalist production has moved human relations with the material world out of the scale of the body, which deeply affects our capacity to make sense of the spaces we occupy (Connerton, 2009, pp. 101–111). It is tempting to relate those remarks to what happened in the Bolivian highlands in 2003: by besieging La Paz and blocking roads, Omasuyos peasants interrupted capitalist flow and established their own pace; during the lengthy marches from their communities to the seat of government, they grasped their territory and, when they finally arrived there, they saw the city as a whole, as the centre of *q’ara* power, as Tupac Katari did.

PART II – EL ALTO

Located on the west side of La Paz, the city of El Alto means, “the heights”. The place was one of the campsites of Tupac Katari’s siege, but it was only after the mid-twentieth century that it became an urban settlement. In the relationship between countryside and city identified in the previous chapters, El Alto and its inhabitants, called *alteños*, play a more ambiguous role than Omasuyos: they are characterised by their “liminality”, as Sian Lazar noted (Lazar, 2008, p. 175; 228–229).

In 2003, the main stage of the mobilisation changed from Omasuyos to El Alto after the deaths in Warisata. The city witnessed the most dramatic events in October 2003, when almost 60 civilians were killed by the Bolivian army. The main social organisations joined the mobilisation against the government and the whole city was filled with barricades. It was in El Alto that the call against the export of natural gas to the United States via Chilean ports became a national slogan. *Alteños* started their mobilisation moved by other social actors, but quickly – because of the state’s violence – their “solidarity” protests started to target their own claims.

Chapter Four describes the main events that occurred in El Alto during September and October 2003 and explains how they escalated to Sánchez de Lozada’s resignation, on 17 October. Then, the chapter explores the immediate context and causes of the mobilisation, such as the way the city has developed itself during the last decades as a creature of and a response against neoliberalism, becoming a centre of informal economy that unifies many aspects of rural and urban lives. The strength of the struggle in 2003 can also be explained by the existence of rooted local organisations, such as the *juntas vecinales* (neighbourhood councils) and the street traders’ associations, which were also unintentionally empowered by neoliberal state-shrinkage policies. The political identity of the *alteño* is then explored in its many facets: as indigenous, as young, as women, and as miner. Finally, the chapter depicts the major expectations *alteños* have regarding the state and their general relationship with the Bolivian nation.

Chapter Five explores a main collective memory upheld by social activists during 2003 in El Alto: the War of the Pacific against Chile, in which Bolivia lost its coastline. In the repertoire of Bolivian nationalism, the former seacoast became a symbol of “lost opportunities” (to use Walter Montenegro’s expression), of all the promises of development denied to the nation because of its landlocked condition. Within this narrative, the image of the Chilean enemy was evoked during October: people criticised Chilean profit from the gas industry but also blamed Chilean advisors for the government’s violence. The chapter then explores how people relate to the image of the war, not only during protests, but in their everyday lives, highlighting the importance of schooling, visual representations through maps of the lost territories, and

commemorative celebrations that are present even in small rural communities. A second step to analyse the strength and the complexities of the memory of the war, following the processual approach identified in Chapter One, is to check how it was reproduced over the last 136 years in literary and scholarly accounts. In this particular case, interest in the war and its different depictions were deeply entangled with national politics: while the war tended to be a valuable instrument of opposition in moments of political crisis, official attempts to use it as a tool for creating a more passive political consensus around national governments were not as efficient.

CHAPTER FOUR – THE “GAS WAR”

Unfolding of the crisis

When the two peasant marches arrived in El Alto on 8 September 2003, the main social organisations of El Alto were organising a twenty-four hour civic strike (*paro cívico*), with blockades of the main streets, against the *formularios maya y paya*, a municipal initiative for house registration (Webber, 2011b, p. 206). The Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto (FEJUVE, the local federation of neighbourhood councils) and the Central Obrera Regional (COR, the municipal workers' union) called for the mobilisation after several activities with experts and discussions with grassroots leaders, in which they identified that the registration plans were part of a larger strategy by the municipality to raise housing taxes.¹³⁷ In the words of Vicente Fernández, a member of the FEJUVE'S executive board in 2003, “people did not agree to paying more taxes if there were no jobs, no opportunities for people to earn an income.”¹³⁸ A second civic strike, now open-ended (*indefinido*), against the registration plans, started on 15 September but quickly finished because the mayor, under pressure due to the scale of the protests, agreed to cancel the initiative.

By mid-September, however, the popular movements in the city were already engaged in other, more national, demands. They demonstrated solidarity for the peasant petition; demanded the annulment of the Law of Citizen-Security, which would allow the criminalisation of road-blockades; were against the Free-Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and, finally, rejected the export of gas to the United States through Chile (Gomez, 2004, p. 23; Webber, 2011, p. 206). Within a couple of weeks, the rejection of the export of gas turned into a national slogan which unified social movements from El Alto and the *paceño* highland with coca growers, landless organisations in the lowlands, unionised workers represented by the COB and left-wing civic committees, such as Potosí Civic Committee (COMCIPO) in Potosí.

The discussion over the export of gas to the US, which was going to be managed by Pacific LNG, a consortium of energy companies, had become an increasingly heated topic in public discussions during previous months.¹³⁹ During the government of Hugo Banzer and Jorge Quiroga (1997-2002), new reserves of natural gas were announced and, based on that information, the government started a campaign to find new markets. The former state oil and

¹³⁷ Interview with Luis Flores, part of the executive committee of FEJUVE on 2003, on 24 May 2013.

¹³⁸ Interview on 23 May 2013.

¹³⁹ Pacific LNG consortium was composed of Repsol-YPF, British Gas, British Petroleum and Total Fina Elf (Orgáz García, 2002, p. 192).

gas company, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales de Bolivia (YPFB), was privatised in 1996, under the first mandate of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, and between 1997 and 2003 the proved and possible gas reserves jumped from 9.82 to 70.01 trillion cubic feet (TCF). Instead of creating positive expectations, the new reserves raised intense discussions over how and whether Bolivians would profit from the resources at all. Therefore, popular disapproval was not only focused on the new gas export plans, which were seen as unfavourable, but also on the privatisation of strategic state companies, such as YPFB, and the increasing power that transnationals held in the country in more general terms.¹⁴⁰ In El Alto, former members of FEJUVE's executive board in 2003 remember that the organisation has promoted many political formation activities with NGOs and intellectuals since mid-2002 and the export of natural resources under the control of transnational companies was a main topic:

We held seminars on hydrocarbons, on the FTAA, on economic issues. We invited intellectuals. García Linera, the current Vice-President, was in our seminars five or six times. It was all in FEJUVE's headquarters. Then, seminars were promoted in the districts. El Alto has 10 districts. (...) The main reason for our disgrace, misery, backwardness, and underdevelopment was that the resources were in the hands of the transnational companies, which left a *miseria* [miserly amount] for Bolivia. And the government was a servant, a *vende-patria* [traitor to the fatherland].¹⁴¹

Besides the FEJUVE's activities, the discussion over the Pacific LNG gas export plan was also very present among local radio stations. Marco Llanos, a social communicator who by that time had organised a program on Wayna Tambo, a radio channel based in Villa Dolores focusing on youth audiences, talks about how the topic started to effervesce:

We did a series of programs, and we always approached the hydrocarbons issue. We invited Pablo Ramos, a comrade who is an economist and is now retired, and he talked about the Pacific LNG project. (...) It was terrible, they were going to sell thousands of cubic feet for centimes for twenty years. And the liquefying plants were going to be in Chile, not in Bolivia. Again the history

¹⁴⁰ In Bolivia, the privatisation of state companies followed a model called "capitalisation" in which the government sold half of the shares to private companies and kept the other half in public pension funds. In contrast with governmental rhetoric, which would claim that 'capitalisation' improved the efficiency of the exploration of natural gas and, as a result, new reserves were discovered, some scholars have argued that these numbers were constantly manipulated to favour the transnational oil companies that bought undervalued shares of state companies and would now profit from the announced "urgency" to find new markets for the new reserves (Gomez, 2004, p. 41; Orgáz García, 2002, pp. 151–195). This urgency was what justified the low prices the consortium was willing to pay for the gas at the "well head", almost 50% lower than the price Brazil, the main gas exporter at that moment, was currently paying (Orgáz García, 2002, p. 194). According to Gomez, this price corresponded to only 20% of the standard gas price in international markets (Gomez, 2004, p. 41). Recently, the newspaper *Página Siete* published an article presenting the information on gas reserves over the past fifteen years; see Mamani (2015).

¹⁴¹ Florián Calcina, interview on 22 May 2013. Carlos Barrerra, Vicente Fernandez, Luis Flores and Julio Quilali, other former members of FEJUVE in 2003, also emphasised the importance of those seminars and workshops for the October mobilisation in their interviews.

of Bolivia was going to be repeated, the plunder of our natural resources. (...) There were different spaces where people started to move. A Christian station, the Radio Cruz del Sur, which is not normally considered political, had a specialist who talked about hydrocarbons and was criticising the government the whole time. This is a very popular radio station in the indigenous highland communities. There was a social strength, you know? There was effervescence. Inside, it was like lava, like magma, everything was burning. The only people that would not perceive it were the politicians.¹⁴²

By that time, there was already a widespread idea that Bolivia was offering her main resource, natural gas, to foreign powers, as had happened with silver in colonial times and the tin during the twentieth century, with little benefit for the national population. In a book prophetically called *La Guerra del Gas* (The Gas War) published in 2002, the journalist Mirko Orgáz García denounces the Bolivian state as a mere representative of the transnational companies' power and urges the "nation" to react against the plunder of gas. Inspired by the "Water War" in Cochabamba in April 2000, when popular movements resisted the privatisation of water resources, Orgáz calls for a "resurrection, from below, of the oppressed nation, from the deprived masses of the city and countryside" (Orgáz García, 2002, p. 247). In his argument, Orgáz constantly refers to classic nationalist and left-wing writers such as Sergio Almaráz Paz and Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, who had written famous essays questioning the domination of foreign powers in the hydrocarbons sector in Bolivia (Almaraz Paz, 1958; Quiroga Santa Cruz, 1982).

On 19 September 2003, a national day of protest in defence of natural gas was called by Bolivia's main social organisations (COB, the two CSUTCBs, the coca growers' federations, groups involved in the struggle for water in Cochabamba), with demonstrations taking place in La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Sucre and Potosí. The majority of the protestors were concentrated in La Paz and Cochabamba, which gathered over 50,000 and 20,000 people respectively (Webber, 2011b, p. 207). As Webber puts it, the call for the nationalisation of gas was already the fundamental collective action frame in the protests (2011b, p. 215).

The idea of exporting gas through Chile, understood as an enemy nation because of the War of the Pacific (1879) and the loss of the seacoast, was also an element that helped to foster indignation against the government. As we could see in Llanos's testimony, people criticised the fact that it was Chile that was going to receive the liquefying plant; Chilean industrialisation would be fostered instead of Bolivian. The image of Chile in Bolivian popular imagery will be analysed in greater detail in the next chapter but here it is important to emphasise that the "national enemy" appeal did play an important role in fostering the mobilisation but this initial

¹⁴² Interview on 26 February 2013.

emphasis on the animosity against Chile was, during September and October, turned into more positive proposals: the nationalisation of natural resources and the industrialisation of Bolivia.

If the situation was still under some state control, the events that occurred in the *paceño* highlands only one day after the national day of protests were definitely the last straw in the biggest social and political turmoil of recent decades in Bolivia. When the army killed five people including an eight-year old girl while clearing roads in Sorata and Warisata to bring a group of tourists back to La Paz, people in El Alto joined the grief and revolt of the Aymara peasant population.¹⁴³ This was also seen as a “spark” (*chispa*) by many *alteños*, the reason why they started such a radical mobilisation:

A group of tourists got stuck by the peasants and the government, always identifying with the dominant class, begins to rescue them using arms and some peasant brothers die. Then, the process of 2003 is generated from this spark, you see? The *alteño* was prepared (...). And we started to have socialisation activities, general assemblies [*ampliados*] of the FEJUVE to undertake the measures. On 8 October, we start a civic strike [*paro*] of twenty-four hours. We say this strike must be strong, that not even the flies should be able to fly.¹⁴⁴

October 2003 began with Warisata’s spark, a symbol of the government’s contempt for peasants and indigenous lives. After it, the petitions started to include the resignation of the government as a first demand, as in Omasuyos. One might be surprised by the intensity of the reactions showed by *alteños* regarding the peasant struggle. A possible explanation for this is that most inhabitants of El Alto have links to the highlands, they still have family members living there and a considerable number of them still keep their small crops and pieces of land in their original communities, as we identified in Part I. However, this *alteño* reaction was a new phenomenon, since, as Lazar puts it, it did not happen in 2000, when the peasant blockades were even more intense than in 2003. Lazar suggests that, in 2003, the hunger strike held by Felipe Quispe at Radio San Gabriel since the beginning of September played a central role in increasing *alteños’* solidarity regarding their peasant “brothers” (2006, p. 191), but certainly the aggressive stance of the government, which caused the deaths in the highlands, also had a significant impact. On 2 October, two marches, one organised by the COR and the other by students of the Universidad Pública de El Alto (UPEA), arrived at Radio San Gabriel to visit the

¹⁴³ Being a touristic city with a mild climate and beautiful views of Illampu Mountain, Sorata was especially crowded on those days because of a local festival that happens every September. Almost a thousand tourists, among them about seventy Europeans and North Americans, got stuck for more than a week because of the peasant blockades. According to Gomez, the government undertook a disproportionate military operation to rescue the tourists after a request from the US Ambassador (2004, p. 42). After six people (five civilians and one soldier) were killed in the operation, the government was justifiably accused of valuing the tourists’ well-being more highly than the peasants’ lives.

¹⁴⁴ Julio Quilali, member of FEJUVE in 2003, interview on 13 June 2013.

hunger strikers (Gomez, 2004, p. 68). The peasants' physical presence created a political visibility that allowed these demonstrations of solidarity and of cultural and political bonds to take place.

The Warisata events also touched other national social sectors, which soon started their own measures of pressure. During the last days of September and the first days of October, the COB declared a national strike and organised almost daily marches in the city of La Paz (Gomez, 2004, p. 65-69). On 30 September, the Coordinadora del Gas initiated a march of about 300 people from Cochabamba heading to the *paceño* highlands (Gomez, 2004, p. 66).¹⁴⁵ On 6 October, 800 miners from Huanuni started to march towards the seat of government, reaching El Alto two days later (Gomez, 2004, p. 72-73; Webber, 2011b, p. 209). The appearance of these sectors in the southern districts of El Alto was also a factor for mobilisation amongst the city's inhabitants. Luis Saucedo, who was seventeen years old during in 2003, remembers that he first engaged in the protests with the arrival of the marches:

You saw the teachers and the miners marching through the highway that comes from Oruro, you couldn't be indifferent. You saw trucks coming with miners, miners coming on foot, the coca growers (...). And people had a tradition of organisation, so, as they were not indifferent to their arrival, the *juntas vecinales* decide to support them, even without consulting FEJUVE at a macro level. I remember people going out to give them water, they were received with food in schools. So you decide to support, you don't need to have Fejuve telling you, your support is spontaneous. You saw and said, 'That's it, we'll help them'. And, as we already had the *juntas*, this support is organised through them.¹⁴⁶

At the beginning of October, FEJUVE organised a general assembly with all the presidents of the *juntas*, where it was decided to call a third "mobilised and open-ended" civic strike, calling for the "immediate resignation" of Sánchez de Lozada and his ministers, "because of the tragic events that occurred in Sorata and Warisata"; stating their moral and material support for the peasants on hunger strike and demanding compliance with their petition; opposing gas export contracts through Chile and Peru and demanding the nationalisation and industrialisation of gas.¹⁴⁷ On 8 October, the third civic strike started and, as had happened in the civic strikes before, the main roads were blocked by the *vecinos* and the city was totally paralysed. Over the following days, the protest spiralled and activists blocked a petroleum plant located in the south of El Alto, leaving La Paz with no gasoline. The government's reaction was to militarise the city, in a brutal operation that killed almost 60 people by 13 October 2003. After

¹⁴⁵ The Coordinadora del Gas (Gas Coordinator) was an initiative that comprised the sectors that participated in the 'Water War' in Cochabamba in 2000 (factory workers, professional organisations, *regantes* peasants and coca growers) and the some other national organisations such as the COB (Gomez, 2004, p. 61).

¹⁴⁶ Interview on 22 May 2013.

¹⁴⁷ A more detailed description of FEJUVE's demand will be explored in the section on the "October agenda".

that, the pressure for Sánchez de Lozada to resign increased, coming from middle-class leadership in La Paz and sectors of the government that started to detach themselves from the president. Finally, on 17 October 2003, Sánchez de Lozada resigned and fled to the United States (Webber, 2011b, pp. 209–212).

Informal economy

At the time of the protests in 2003, El Alto's population was about 650,000 while La Paz, its "older sister", had about 790,000 inhabitants (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2001). Today, the latest census (2012) indicates that El Alto has surpassed La Paz, with 835,000 and 755,000 people living in each city respectively (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2001). El Alto's first urban area, Villa Dolores, was founded in 1942 (Garfias & Mazurek, 2005, p. 11) and it was only in 1988 that El Alto was recognised as a municipality independent from La Paz (Gill, 2000, p. 26; Lazar, 2008, p. 30). The city followed a national pattern of intense urbanisation in the second half of the twentieth century: in 1950, Bolivia was a rural country, with 73.8% of its population living in rural areas but these proportions had been totally inverted by 2012, when 67.3% of the population lived in urban areas (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2014).

El Alto was an example of this inversion. After seventy years, El Alto's population jumped from 11,000 in the 1940s (Garfias & Mazurek, 2005, p. 14) to almost a million, becoming the second largest city in Bolivia. It was during the 1970s and 1980s that the rate of growth peaked: between 1976 and 1992, the city's population grew from 95,434 to 405,492, reaching an annual rate of growth of 9.23% (Lazar 2008, p. 47). After this period, the city continued to grow but at a slower pace: the annual rate of growth was 5.10% between 1992 and 2001 (649,958 people) and only 2.3% for the last decade, between 2001 and 2012, when the city was populated by 835,077 people.

The 1980s was a period of radical structural change in the country. As in many countries in Latin America and across the world, the Bolivian government started to bring in policies according to the neoliberal agenda of restructuring in 1985, during the government of Víctor Paz Estenssoro, a former nationalist leader.¹⁴⁸ One of the main consequences of these policies,

¹⁴⁸ However, the adoption of the neoliberal agenda can also be explained by the Bolivian context at the time. In 1982, the ex-president and former MNR leader, Hernán Siles Zuazo, was elected again after more than 18 years of dictatorships mixed with short periods of democracy. However, the UDP government, a coalition between left parties and trade unions, faced many difficulties. During this decade, the tin sector - which had accounted for 70% of the country's exports during the 1930s and therefore had sustained the national economy during a considerable part of the twentieth century - was in severe crisis, accounting for only 24% of exports (Morales & Espejo 1994, p. 14). Besides this, the whole of Latin America was facing

concentrated in the much hated Decree 21060, was the dismissal of around 22,000 state miners, almost 80% of the total mining workforce (Yashar, 2005, p. 184). These former workers occupied the peripheries of the big cities, such as Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and La Paz. In El Alto, the inhabitants of Santiago II zone are known for being ex-miners. A second period of neoliberal measures occurred under the first mandate of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (1993-1997), who had been Paz Estenssoro's economic minister in the 1980s. As seen in the last section, one of Sánchez de Lozada's main economic measures in this period was the "capitalisation" of strategic state companies, such as YPFB.

The dismissal of thousands of miners, however, only partly explains the impressive population growth of El Alto during the 1980s. The situation in the countryside was increasingly difficult and a considerable number of families in the highlands started to migrate to the cities. In 1982, as noted by Sandra Garfias and Hubert Mazurek, the El Niño phenomenon affected agricultural production in the *paceño* highland with floods and droughts (Garfias & Mazurek, 2005, p. 14). Moreover, as seen in Chapter Two, the neoliberal period was also very damaging for agricultural products, since between 1985 and 1998, the gross value of highland peasant production was cut by almost half (Pérez Luna, 2003, p. 59, 2005, p. 73). Lazar identifies three waves of migration that impacted El Alto's population: the first was right after the Agrarian Reform in 1953, since former *colonos* had more social and geographical mobility and this was combined with a period of great drought and famine in the highlands; the second was during the dictatorship of Hugo Bánzer in the 1970s, caused by a construction boom supported by US aid and foreign debt; and the third was related to neoliberal restructuring (2008, p. 47).

Coming from a mining or a peasant background, most of El Alto's new inhabitants found work in the growing informal economy. In a study comparing the city's situation in 1989 and 2000, Bruno Rojas and Germán Guaygua point out that the proportion of precarious employment was very high in both periods, around 70%. The main difference during this ten-year gap was the grade of precariousness of *alteño* workers: while in 1989 only 1.8% of the total workers were considered to be in an extremely precarious situation, in 2000, this number was 15.1%. If analysed alone, 30.7% of the female working population was considered to be in an extremely precarious situation, and this number reaches 62.5% if only women in the commercial

an external debt crisis and the government had severe difficulties in satisfying all the sectors that had supported its election. All these reasons contributed to creating a period of intense economic destabilisation after a couple of years of government, with a shrinking economy and hyper inflation as high as 8,767% in 1985 (Mesa et al. 2003, p.741-6), resulting in anticipated elections in that year. In 1985, Víctor Paz Estenssoro was elected. Within this context, his measures for economic stabilisation were welcomed by certain sectors of Bolivian society, despite their negative effects on state workers.

sector in 2000 are taken into account (Rojas C. & Guaygua, 2002, pp. 73–74).¹⁴⁹ According to the authors, an “extremely precarious” situation is defined by temporary employment, extensive workdays, absence of social security and income lower than the national minimum wage (Rojas C. & Guaygua, 2002, p. 72), which was around 440 Bolivian *pesos* per month in 2003, no more than 60 dollars.¹⁵⁰ According to official data, 65.31% of the population was poor and 17.18% was extremely poor in the city in 2001 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2005).

Based on these numbers, it is reasonable to conclude that, even though El Alto was never a place characterised by social security and good working conditions, the situation before the 2003 mobilisation was one of intense hardship for an impressive number of the population. It is not surprising, therefore, that there was immediate and radical reaction against the new taxes that were planned at both national and municipal levels (such as the *maya y paya* registration forms) as the official solution to the state’s increasing fiscal crisis.¹⁵¹

Rooted local organisations

Some authors have correctly argued, however, that the events in El Alto in October 2003 could not have occurred just as a result of a “politics of desperation”: they were also caused by rooted traditions of social organisation in Bolivian society that were reproduced in El Alto, a “politics of surplus and creativity” that managed not only to oppose policies but also to propose new solutions (Lazar, 2008, p. 254; Webber, 2011b). Jeffery Webber calls all the formal and informal networks that are used by the Bolivian indigenous workers and peasants an “infrastructure of class-struggle” (2011, p. 20). In the case of El Alto, this is comprised of the city’s main social organisations, such as the FEJUVE and the local COR, and base-level organisations, such as the *juntas vecinales* and the street-vendors associations (Webber, 2011b, p. 197).

According to Sian Lazar (2008, p. 250), these organisations were relatively strong in 2003, an affirmation which is also supported by the testimonies of the former leaders of FEJUVE

¹⁴⁹ According to Rojas and Rossell, the commerce sector occupied around 64,000 of the total 117,000 women who were economically active in El Alto in 2000 (Rojas C. & Rossell, 2006, p. 65).

¹⁵⁰ Today, in 2015, the minimum wage is 1,656 Bolivian *pesos* per month, around 240 US dollars. One of the main measures of Evo Morales’ administration was the increase in the minimum wage, which was still around 60 dollars in 2006 when the MAS came to power (Toro, 2014; Vargas, 2015).

¹⁵¹ In a country highly dependent on natural resources, privatisation combined with less favourable contracts with extractive companies meant a considerable decrease in tax revenues, which left the Bolivian state in a deep fiscal crisis by the end of the 1990s. While the local government promoted strategies such as the *maya y paya* formularies, the national government also promoted tax increases, such as income tax increase in February 2003 that would affect lower middle class sectors and that was radically resisted by the police.

cited above. Beyond the personal engagement of the leaders, however, there was also a political background that fostered the power of local organisations. Neoliberal policies “created their enemies” not only by boosting urbanisation, dismissing state workers, growing the informal sector and undermining the peasant economy, but also by enhancing the power of mediation of local organisations as a result of its state-shrinkage policies (Lazar, 2008, p. 178).

The *juntas vecinales* are not specific to El Alto; they are common territorial organisations in all Bolivian main cities and are heirs to a long tradition of local citizenship. The identification as *vecino* is a term for local citizenship, with a person-to-person dimension that roots someone to a particular space (Lazar, 2008, p. 63). Lazar investigates the medieval use of the word in Spain, which was taken to colonial Spanish America and indicates a member of town, a homeowner, who had a strong sense of loyalty towards his community. According to Guerra, “contrary to the modern citizen, who is an individual component of an abstract collectivity — the nation or the people — the *vecino* is always a man who is concrete, territorialized and rooted” (cited in Lazar, 2008, p. 64). Nevertheless, while the *vecino* was initially related to the Spanish, creole and *mestizo* populations of towns during colonial and republican times, during the radical process of urbanisation of recent decades, the *juntas vecinales* have become increasingly related to popular movements and the demands for basic welfare services at the local level.



Figure 2 – March on 6 March, anniversary of El Alto. Each organisation (*junta*, market association, school council, etc.) has its own banner.

They appeared in El Alto during the 1950s to demand the installation of basic services, such as electricity, clean water supply, paving of streets and transport from state authorities (García Linera et al., 2008, p. 592). The *juntas* also organised voluntary work by local neighbours to implement those services, such as constructing schools or installing sewage systems, in a process called the “self-construction” of the zones (Lazar, 2008, p. 70). In a context of a new urban space, the *juntas* were very important institutions and had a huge number of demands to deal with at least during the first decades of their existence. During the 1990s, the 1994 Popular Participation Law enhanced local power by classifying the *juntas vecinales* as base territorial organisations (*organizaciones territoriales de base*, OTBs) and giving them the right to participate in annual municipal plans, in which they could demand public works for their zone from the municipality in a more structured and state-sanctioned way (Lazar, 2006, p. 186).

This phenomenon happened not only with territory-based organisations but also with function-based unions in El Alto. The neoliberal framework of economic de-regulation turned commercial trade unions and associations into important mediation actors, since it allowed the informal sector to self-regulate in central issues. Lazar identified this process in the way the Federación de Gremialistas, the federation of street traders, and its affiliated associations dealt with disputes regarding market spaces in El Alto. According to her, the trade unions defended this regulation function since, by being “de facto state agents”, they also held “considerable power within the commercial sector itself” (Lazar, 2008, p. 212).

As we can note, a state presence was never very strong in El Alto’s history, but the institutional changes of the 1990s allowed the main social organisations in the city, both with territorial and functional bases, to gain more power of mediation between *alteños* and the state. By performing state functions, these organisations could become trapped in co-opted networks within the main political parties, with corrupt leaders, abandoning communities’ interests for private ones, a “frequent occurrence” (Lazar, 2008, p. 250). On the other hand, the organisations gained a centrality in *alteños*’ lives that they would not otherwise have had, allowing them to mobilise a large number of people under their call. According to Fernanda Wanderley, this institutional engagement was combined with rather than opposed to street and direct action, in a process that created spaces of participation in public issues, not only at the local but also at the national level (Wanderley, 2008, p. 239). This was what happened in September and October 2003, when the dissatisfaction with local tax policies was not solved through traditional institutional channels and the street mobilisation machinery created to struggle against these measures was, a couple of days later, applied to a national issue, the non-exportation and nationalisation of natural gas.

Identities and struggle

Many observers of contemporary El Alto do not hesitate to call the city an indigenous (or Aymara) urban space (García Linera, 2004; Lazar, 2008, p. 258; Mamani Ramirez, 2004, p. 157). They mostly based this assertion on the census data on self-identification: in 2001, around 74% of the population called themselves Aymara and another 7% identified with other indigenous groups (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2005). In 2012, these numbers decreased considerably and only 45% self-identified as Aymara and 4% as other indigenous groups.¹⁵²

In any case, the strong identification of *alteños* with their peasant origins is undeniable. Most of them express a great attachment to their native *pueblo* (provincial town or community) and even the younger generations, who were born and raised in El Alto, carry this affection (Lazar, 2006, p. 190). Besides, as we have seen in the previous chapters, many *alteños*, particularly women, still keep their lands and travel constantly to the countryside, on a weekly or monthly basis, to take care of family members, crops and animals.

It is this strong attachment that allowed Pablo Mamani to state that in October 2003 the government's motivations were the "desires of extermination of indigenous people", an action informed by a long-standing racism (Mamani Ramirez, 2004, p. 157). In other words, the massacre was an act of genocide against the indigenous population.¹⁵³ Through such a lens, *alteños* themselves would choose an indigenous identification above the national one, as shown by extensive use of *wiphalas* that Mamani identified during those days in October 2003 (2004,

¹⁵² The numbers for the 2012 census in El Alto are still awaiting official updates. According to the last update, on 30 June 2014, El Alto has 385,686 inhabitants who self-identify as Aymara (around 45% of the total population) and a further 31,357 inhabitants with other indigenous identification (around 4% of the total). However, the data does not specify the composition of the "ignored" number (around 431,409), which might represent a sector of the population that was not asked this question or might represent a non-identification with indigenous groups. In 2013, the government published their first official report on the census that stated that only around 40% of the national population (2,806,592) over 15 years old identified with some indigenous group/nation (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2013, p. 50). In November 2014, the official number of people in the whole of Bolivia who identified with any indigenous nation or group was much bigger: 4,199,977. However, this number only represents around 41% of the total population, since 5,859,879 people appear as non-specified "ignored". Given these recent changes, it is still too soon to offer an interpretation of the new census results in this research.

¹⁵³ The official charge against the state actors who authorised the violent operation was "genocide", typified by Article 138 of the Bolivian Penal Code, under the modality of "bloody massacre", explained by the second paragraph of the article (see the final sentence that condemns seven state authorities (Bolpress, 2011)). This gave rise to the idea that the Bolivian judicial courts interpreted that the government acted out of racism in October 2003. Actually, according to the final interpretation of the Bolivian Constitutional Court in 2006, "massacres", as described by the second paragraph of Article 138, do not need to be ethnically or racially motivated; they might be held against an "heterogeneous" population (Tribunal Constitucional, 2006). On this discussion, see also Cusicanqui Morales (2011).

p. 150). In a study published in 2004, García Linera points out the same symbolic inversion and predominance of indigenous identity:

In the same way as the rural indigenous, in October the urban indigenous and the unionised plebe have rebelled; (...) and it is not strange then (...) the symbolic uprising of the frames the *vecinos* used to assert their actions and project them into the future, as they did not find a referential of life and future in the Bolivian *tricolor* [the national flag], but in another flag [the *wiphala*] that, according to local leader in the Tahuantinsuyu zone taking care of a street barricade, is “ours and our grandparents’ true flag” (García Linera, 2004, p. 56).

In contrast to these intellectual analyses, the testimonies of *alteños* regarding their relationship with Aymara peasants, particularly after the events in Warisata, present a much more nuanced perspective of their indigenous identity. They emphasise their identification with them, but this identification is not direct:

In one of the general assemblies, the city of El Alto decides to support the peasant comrades, who were suffering different attacks by the army (...). There were casualties in Warisata and in Omasuyos as well (...). El Alto is solidary. (...) We are migrants and as migrants we should be solidary.¹⁵⁴

Some statements go further and stress a common blood, a kinship: “We decided to support the peasant brothers (...), because we are of the same blood. Of course, we were born in the city, but we are also the same”.¹⁵⁵ In both cases, the *alteños* identify the peasants as a social group very close to them, attached through blood or because of the past (the majority of *alteños* are rural migrants), but still different. According to Lazar, even though *alteños* “support the peasants when it comes to political mobilisation”, they still perceive themselves as different from them, “largely because they have become accustomed to city life”. “Nevertheless”, she continues, “although peasants from their birth villages might be different (...), they are still kin, both figuratively and literally” (Lazar, 2008, p. 230). Therefore, the experience of urban life is decisive in the shaping of their identities and, even if we recognise the strong indigenous identity of *alteños*, this identity is qualitatively different from the one shown by the Omasuyos peasants, for example.

Interpretations that over-emphasise El Alto’s indigenous character tend to obliterate not just the differences of urban character between *alteños* and peasant Aymaras but also their strong national attachment, something that was shown even in Omasuyos, as discussed in the

¹⁵⁴ Roberto Nina, interview on 13 May 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Walter Andic, interview on 29 June 2013

previous chapters. Marco Llanos recalls a powerful moment of defining the *alteño* identity during the mobilisation of 2005:¹⁵⁶

There was a song, there are always songs and refrains. 'The rulers, what are they? They are the servants of Washington. The military personnel, what are they? They are the servants of Washington'. You see? Everything was 'servants of Washington' or 'heartless beasts', things that are quite aggressive. And someone had the idea to ask 'and the *alteños*, what are they?' and everybody was suddenly shocked. Then someone finally said: 'they are the warriors of the nation'.¹⁵⁷ And then the whole song was completed (...). This was self-identification, it was very important. Because they were self-identifying as the ones who protect the natural resources. As *alteños*, they struggle beyond their interests.¹⁵⁸

Other testimonies also identify *alteños* as being selfless and patriotic activists: "our goal was for the whole country,"¹⁵⁹ "El Alto thinks of the whole country, of Bolivia,"¹⁶⁰ "El Alto, always thinking of the country."¹⁶¹ Those testimonies demonstrate that most of the actors did not perceive the national identity as something that should be substituted for the indigenous identity, since national symbols coexisted in the mobilisation with indigenous ones.

Another characteristic shared by both *alteños* and Omasuyos peasants is their self-identification as a vanguard: "in the end, we achieved a great thing, for El Alto, which has been a vanguard since the beginning, and (...) for the Bolivian population as a whole",¹⁶² "I said at some moment that El Alto was going to be a *caudillo* [popular leader] of the Bolivian population and the whole world",¹⁶³ "it wasn't the COB, the teachers federation, it was El Alto who gave the main social, economic and political directions [*línea*]"¹⁶⁴

In contrast with their peasant "brothers", however, *alteños* have a different perception of the national collectivity they represented during their struggle in October. Rather than depicting the nation (or Qullasuyo) as an indigenous peasant majority struggling against a white urban minority, they identify a mass of people of different origins, coming from distinct

¹⁵⁶ In 2005, FEJUVE and COR, together with other social organisations, mobilised in order to demand that the government of Carlos Mesa fully nationalise natural resources rather than just increasing the sector's taxes, as was being proposed by a new law under the scrutiny of Congress. Even though those months of May and June 2005 before the resignation of Carlos Mesa were called "The Second Gas War", there was no state violence against the protestors (Webber, 2011b, pp. 241–259).

¹⁵⁷ In Spanish, the song has rhyme: *Los gobernantes, ¿qué cosa son? Son los sirvientes de Washington. Los militares, ¿qué cosa son? Son unas bestias sin corazón. Y los alteños, ¿qué cosa son? Son los guerreros de la nación.*

¹⁵⁸ Interview on 26 February 2013.

¹⁵⁹ Roberto Nina, interview on 13 May 2013.

¹⁶⁰ Mauricio Cori, interview on 22 May 2013.

¹⁶¹ Vicente Fernández, interview on 23 May 2013.

¹⁶² Javier Ajno, interview on 5 December 2012.

¹⁶³ Carlos Barrera, interview on 24 May 2013.

¹⁶⁴ Julio Quilali, interview on 13 June 2013.

ecological zones, departments or occupational backgrounds and they are all represented in the city's urban landscape: "in El Alto, we are from the nine departments, with different characters, there are people from Yungas, from the valleys, from everywhere, the unity is here, we have all sorts of blood";¹⁶⁵ "migrants from the nine departments are concentrated here in El Alto, (...) a *potosino* [from Potosí department] can be a zone president, a *cochabambino* [from Cochabamba department] can be a neighbourhood president";¹⁶⁶ "El Alto is an intercultural city, because all sorts of people live here; (...) we have strength, there were the miners, the factory workers, we have everything here".¹⁶⁷

Living in a city of almost a million inhabitants probably contributed to an enhanced notion of diversity and plurality. *Alteños* not only differ from Aymara peasants in their perception of themselves and their role in the country, but also differ among themselves. Young people who participated in the struggles of October emphasise the role of youth in the struggle, of always taking on the riskiest tasks. "When people started to die, it was the youth that was at the front, throwing stones, raising the Bolivian flag, and we were the ones who died first...", remembers Rubén Fernández, who was 23 years-old during the protests, and witnessed one of the most violent episodes of October, the massacre in Río Seco, in which dozens of people died. He also narrated that it was during the celebrations after the resignation of Sánchez de Lozada that he saw for the first time the *wiphala*, a flag that would later become an official symbol of the Bolivian indigenous people.¹⁶⁸ His testimony suggests a different experience of struggle: much more voluntarist, less related to the peasant struggle, reluctant to identify a unified *alteño* actor (for him, the main actors were the young people), but still showing an intense nationalism.

Women who participated in the struggle emphasised perhaps the most indigenous face of the mobilisation, a struggle against discrimination. One example is the way that Felipa Catacora, vice-president of FEJUVE during 2012 and 2013 and from a peasant background, describes the main goals of the mobilisation:

We demanded a change, a new state political constitution, new laws, in order to allow people to be respected with rights. I mean, that we were not discriminated against. (...) For example, a woman with *pollera*, when she went to an institution, let's say, the migration office, to apply for a passport or identity card, they looked at you in a biased way, they didn't attend to you, they put you behind people with ties, the people from the city. (...) And when we said something, many people didn't understand, they said 'they don't know how to speak Spanish, they speak Aymara or Quechua... I don't know what you say, go away!' And they expelled us. This was how

¹⁶⁵ Cipriana Apaza, interview on 24 November 2012.

¹⁶⁶ Mauricio Cori, interview on 22 May 2013.

¹⁶⁷ Walter Andic, interview on 29 June 2013.

¹⁶⁸ Interview on 7 June 2013. The information on the *wiphala* was taken from fieldwork notes.

it worked when we did not have law, an intense discrimination. But now it's not like this anymore.¹⁶⁹

This is a very particular view on the mobilisation, and perhaps a view that is largely informed by the progress achieved following the enactment of many laws struggling against racism and gender violence after 2005, including the New State Political Constitution.¹⁷⁰ However, while my interviews suggest that racial discrimination was not a central issue mobilising people in 2003, at least not a clear and identifiable demand amongst the protesters, Felipa's testimony tells us of an experience of prejudice that is not only lived as economic and political inequalities between city and countryside, but also as daily racism suffered in urban spaces and particularly in state institutions, the spaces of power. The identification of these experiences contrasts with the prevailing self-image of the *alteño* during the struggle, the "warrior of the nation", whose main slogan was *El Alto de pie, nunca de rodillas!* (a literal translation is: "El Alto standing, never on its knees"), all of them active and victorious images of the local population. As seen before, the predominant discourse that explains the rebellious dispositions of the *alteños* is related to defending Bolivian interests or their peasant "brothers", or complaining about economic insecurities, such as the lack of jobs and the possibilities of tax rises.

Nevertheless, the fact that men normally do not mention ethnic prejudice as a motivation for action does not mean that they do not experience it. And the fact that women do verbalise these experiences also does not mean that they do not include themselves in the category of active actors in the process of struggle. It only indicates that some aspects of daily life of the city's population were more clearly perceived by women, who also had different political perception of the struggles, in which the rebellious character is mixed with a sense of sacrifice and pain:

This is a very long story and, at the same time, very painful, that we women have lived. (...) Then, October has started and it was very painful, very tragic for us, the women that have unfortunately lived during those days. This is a memory of something that we do not want to happen again.¹⁷¹

Women also tended to suffer more from poverty in El Alto, even in the same households. As seen in the previous section, 30.7% of the female working population were living in an

¹⁶⁹ Interview on 25 March 2013.

¹⁷⁰ The law against racism and all forms of discrimination (Law 45), enacted in October 2010, specifically tackles racist and discriminatory offences committed by public officers (Article 13), such as verbal aggression, access denial, and physical and psychological abuse. In March 2013, a law against gender violence was enacted (Law 348) but it has not prevented the increase in violence against women over the past few years (see Ramos, 2014).

¹⁷¹ Julia Poma Barrera's testimony in Hylton, Choque, Britto *et al* (2005, p. 25).

extremely precarious situation, while only 10% of men were living under these conditions in 2000 (Rojas C. & Guaygua, 2002, p. 73). This can also be perceived in the testimonies of women who engaged in the mobilisation during October, who emphasise their different perceptions of poverty compared to their partners: “My husband didn’t support me, there was division in my household, because he works in a state institution. (...) We women are more realists because we suffer with the crisis more intensely and we have to manage our expenses with the small amount of money we have.”¹⁷²

If there is a common element among all the actors interviewed it is this sense of protagonism and dedication to the struggle. Leaders of the FEJUVE, students and organised women: all of them agree that the people from El Alto are particularly rebellious and inclined to social struggle. A common explanation for this radicalism is their indigenous heritage: “We, people from the highlands, are warriors (...) that’s why all the indigenous popular movement has prevailed so many times in Bolivian history,”¹⁷³ “I tell women ‘be brave’, don’t lock yourselves among children and men within your house walls, in our blood runs indigenous blood.”¹⁷⁴

However, when it comes to real experiences of state violence and resistance, it is the heritage of the mining workers that appears as a strong reference among *alteños*. Luis Barrera, who participated in October as a grassroot *vecino* from the zone of Villa Brasil, was raised in Uncía, a town close to the mining centres of Catavi and Siglo XX, in the north of Potosí department. He witnessed the “San Juan massacre” in 1967 when he was a teenager:¹⁷⁵

By this time, the miners were a very strong social force, there were around thirty thousand miners in the whole of Bolivia. Mining was booming by then. And Barrientos overthrew Victor Paz Estenssoro. I remember, I was young, the helicopters bombed Catavi and Siglo XX (...). From a window, I managed to see: the soldiers kicking the doors and shooting. They didn’t see who was inside, women, children. (...) The next day, when things calmed down, we went to the square, I was young and restless, [we saw] the trucks full of bodies, as if they were logs (...). 2003 made me remember this experience, because the soldiers that arrived from the Naval, close to the lake, came in the same way, they didn’t see anything.¹⁷⁶

Other activists in October also mentioned this experience in the mines as a source of strength: “I was not afraid, I was already used to it because of the mines. When they declared militarised zone during San Juan, I saw all these things, the massacre. Then, in October, I saw it and remembered. (...) we undertook risks, we fought and we are not afraid of those who had

¹⁷² Nelly Orozco Castillo’s testimony in Hylton, Choque, Britto *et al* (2005, p. 38-39).

¹⁷³ Carlos Rojas, interview on 13 June 2013.

¹⁷⁴ Zulma Montes Tarquino’s testimony in Hylton, Choque, Britto *et al* (2005, p. 74).

¹⁷⁵ The massacre occurred in the context of Che Guevara’s *guerrilla* struggle in the lowlands. The army killed at least 87 people in the early morning of 24 June 1967. That was a brutal warning from the Barrientos dictatorship against the organisation of the miners, who had called a conference for that day (Dunkerley, 1984, pp. 148–149).

¹⁷⁶ Interview on 20 May 2013.

shot us”, says Betty Loayza, whose family moved to El Alto after the massive miners’ dismissal in the 1980s (cited in Hylton, Choque, Britto et al 2005, p. 46-47). The miners’ arrival in El Alto during October had a decisive impact on how *alteños* perceived the situation:

The miners were strong fighters, they always held their dynamite. They would always stop the existing public order (...). In 2003, they also arrived here, they cornered them with their dynamite. Without the miners, we would have lived under slavery. Before, there was slavery, (...) our parents worked for free, they received nothing.¹⁷⁷

The miners are a symbol of courage and struggle, but a very specific one: a resistance against state violence, against an authoritarian and non-representative regime, in which the soldiers are always depicted as “them”, the ones that are here to kill “us”. It is hard to overlook, thus, the similarities between this image of the miner and the *alteño* identity of “warriors of the nation” against a “*vende-patria*” state.¹⁷⁸

One last and definitive element of the city’s identity is trade and the *cholo* identity. As we have seen in Chapter Two, trading was an essential activity during colonial times for Indians, providing them with relative political, economic and cultural power. The Republican period was particularly hard not only because of the seizure of communal lands, but also because of the loss of their power as intermediaries, which was transferred to the landowners. After 1953, this situation changed but the activities of traders also changed. Their number grew with the increasing urbanisation of Bolivian society and their activities were concentrated in the peripheries of the metropolitan centres, such as El Alto, taking part in the growing informal sector that boomed in these spaces. Anyone who visits El Alto today, particularly its central areas, will notice how the city is dominated by markets occupying streets and whole commercial buildings.

Therefore, a great number of El Alto’s population play a role of intermediary between the peasant and the urban market economy. As Lazar notices (2008, p. 207), Linda Seligmann’s characterisation of the market women in Peru, the *cholas*, as located “in between” indigenous and non-indigenous worlds (Seligmann, 1989), could be applied to the city of El Alto as a whole. El Alto represents the marketplace on a greater scale, a space that “constitutes the border

¹⁷⁷ Felipa Catacora, interview on 25 March 2013.

¹⁷⁸ For a detailed individual account of this transition from the mines to El Alto’s urban context, see the excellent biography of Félix Muruchi Poma (Kohl, Farthing, & Muruchi P., 2011), former miner activist, who was exiled to Chile and the Netherlands and came back to Bolivia in the 1980s, settling in Ciudad Satelite, a neighbourhood in El Alto. There, he founded the NGO Fomento al Desarrollo y Educación Popular (FODENPO) and actively participated in the struggles of 2003 as a member of the mobilisation commission in his neighbourhood. Later, FODENPO promoted a book on the history and identity of the *ponchos rojos* in Omasuyos (Poma et al., 2008).

marking the separation between the urban and rural spheres and the nexus in which they intersect” (Seligmann, 1989, pp. 698–703).

The *alteño* population, therefore, occupies this intermediate position, which also gives them a position of power. The *cholo* identity is neither white urban (or *mestizo* urban, in Seligmann’s characterisation) nor indigenous peasant. It oscillates between these two poles, defines itself based on their counter-images but is not comprised of an arithmetic average or of a homogeneous race, as dreamt by Latin American intellectuals of the early twentieth century.¹⁷⁹ This identity of El Alto occupies a “liminal” position (Lazar, 2008, p. 228). As conceptualised by Victor Turner, the liminality is a space of ambiguity, of volition, in which social structures play a less definitive role (Turner, 1974, pp. 166–230). In other words, liminality is a position that fosters human agency.

This state of liminality is also seen as dangerous by other social actors. Seligmann argues that *chola* women appeared threatening to their urban clients precisely because “they force the blurring of precise taxonomic boundaries” (Seligmann, 1993, p. 202). The market women are proud and invert social hierarchies, their “aggressive character traits are usually associated with men, they refuse to tolerate racist slurs or insults and wield economic power ideally belonging to *mestizo* men” (Seligmann, 1993, p. 194). The testimonies of *alteñas* cited above can be understood as evidence of a high sensitivity and inconformity to the social hierarchies which were confronted by radical political action during October. The inversion of hierarchies can also be identified with the siege strategy discussed in the previous chapters, in which the city’s dependence on peasant labour and production becomes clearer.

Many similarities can be identified between social actors in Omasuyos and El Alto. In the case of the highland Aymara peasant, the liminal experience occurred with the geographical circuits between countryside, the familiar space of the rural community, and the city, the space of white and *mestizo* power. By contrast, in El Alto, the liminal experience is given by the urban space itself. What unifies *ponchos rojos* and *alteños* in radical collective action is not so much their Aymara heritage, but the fact that they are liminal actors, who have experience in interacting with and confronting the Bolivian state and power elites.

On the other hand, what distinguishes them is the fact that *alteños* are much more diverse in their origins and carry with them the traditions of other groups that have negotiated and resisted the Bolivian state, such as the miners. El Alto is not just an intermediary space between city and countryside; it also mediates between the state and the rest of the country,

¹⁷⁹ Such as the “cosmic race” (*raza cósmica*) predicted by the Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos (1997) in 1925.

the “nation”. Therefore, El Alto not only raised the demands and expectations of indigenous people in Bolivia, but it also – and more importantly - embodied one of the most rooted and unfulfilled promises of the Bolivian nation: socio-economic development.

The October agenda: development and industrialisation

The main demands of the 2003 mobilisation were condensed into the so-called October agenda (*agenda de octubre*). Even though depictions of the agenda’s content tend to vary according to the source, they normally include at least three central elements - the Constituent Assembly, the nationalisation and the industrialisation of natural gas - as Roberto Nina, a local leadership from “6 Marzo Norte” zone, District Four, during 2003, explains:¹⁸⁰

After that in El Alto, people demanded a referendum [on the nationalisation of natural gas], the industrialisation of our hydrocarbons, and the third topic was (...) the new State Political Constitution. Two of these topics were delivered, but the industrialisation of hydrocarbons is still missing [under the governments of Evo Morales]. (...) we did the October agenda in El Alto, there are three topics, nothing more.¹⁸¹

These three points are, however, a result of the political situation that followed October 2003, in which the main social actors organised themselves to demand the fulfilment of the mobilisation’s main petition to the government of Carlos Mesa (2003-2005), who was Sánchez de Lozada’s Vice-President and took over after he resigned. It included, therefore, elements that were not clearly stated during October 2003, but that were present in the national context of the social struggle, such as the Constituent Assembly.¹⁸² The FEJUVE’s resolution in early October demanded: the resignation of Sánchez de Lozada; the cancellation of the “contracts of natural gas sale through Chile or Peru” and the nationalisation and industrialisation of natural resources; attention to the peasants’ and to the UPEA students’ demands; annulment of the New Tributary Code (Law 2492), the Supreme Decree 21060 (considered a milestone of neoliberalism in Bolivia)

¹⁸⁰ When talking about the October agenda, authors have different emphases. Albó and Barrios highlight the demand for a constituent assembly (2007, p. 40), while Webber also includes in his definition, in the context of the social polarisation in 2005, the social control of natural resources and a radical redistribution of wealth and land (2011b, p. 233).

¹⁸¹ Interview on 13 May 2013.

¹⁸² In 2002, between May and August, indigenous sectors from the lowlands marched to La Paz to demand, among other things, a Constitutional Assembly without the mediation of the traditional parties. They were supported by highland indigenous groups affiliated to CONAMAQ, a federation that stated a clear indigenous identity in opposition to the prevailing peasant national organisation. The CSUTCB peasant petition of 70 topics does not include the constitutional demand (check Quispe Huanca, 2013, pp. 125–133) and the resolution of FEJUVE’s general assembly on the 3 October, which stated the beginning of the third civic strike, also does not mention it (FEJUVE, 2003).

and the Law of Citizen-Security; and non-participation in NAFTA (FEJUVE, 2003). From these seven points, the gas issue was the main demand and is normally the main reference when people talk about the October agenda:

The October agenda is not written, it's present in people's memory of the struggle. In this moment, there was no sense of 'we're fighting for that'. There was a clamour saying the gas is not going neither through Chile nor Peru, gas for Bolivians first. Nationalisation, industrialisation. This was a fundamental clamour and this is how the October agenda was constituted. It is not written, it's in the memory and it's a face-to-face [*a viva voz*] petition.¹⁸³

Industrialisation was a key expectation during the process, as it is today, and it is present particularly in the testimonies of FEJUVE's leadership. They are inheritors of the Latin American nationalist left, who identify the lack of industrialisation and the exportation of products without added value as the main problems facing Bolivia. The gas is, then, considered a key resource, since it could turn the situation around, as long as it is managed according to national interests:

We were analysing [those issues] in the political commission [of FEJUVE], and we believed that gas could generate big transformations in the country, it could create a lot of jobs, it could contribute to gross domestic product. It could generate a series of added values, if it was industrialised in the country, if it was not only sold as raw material. So, we had this analysis that this was a strategic product in Bolivia, and, therefore, the struggle was concentrated around hydrocarbons.¹⁸⁴

These expectations are projected throughout Bolivia as a whole, which could be a "developed" and "rich" country if the state acted in favour of the people, using the resources coming from gas: "We had a seminar with gas experts, and there they told us that many materials could be extracted from natural gas and oil, and that could make us rich in Bolivia (...). So, it's very unfair that we Bolivians have all the resources (...), and our rulers are selling it all".¹⁸⁵ Combined with these expectations of development also comes a comparison with other countries, particularly Bolivia's neighbours:

[We wanted] the state to apply some policies that would help the population to move forward, as they do in neighbouring countries, such as Peru, Chile, Brazil. Our compatriots go to these countries to work, there are better living conditions. Here, they don't offer you anything. We had all the resources, we had analysed (...), but there was no capacity to properly manage the state. (...) We asked the government to establish industries in Bolivia, to improve living conditions, that there be more professionals, and that they have work in their own country, that they would not need to migrate from country to country.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Carlos Rojas, interview on 13 June 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Vicente Fernández, interview on 23 May 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Luis Flores, interview on 24 May 2013. This statement is interesting because it shows the intense communication between social actors and left-wing intellectuals. However, this relationship was not actually hierarchical, since these intellectuals were invited by the FEJUVE's leadership to conduct workshops and seminars.

¹⁸⁶ Felipa Catacora, interview on 25 March 2013.

These testimonies indicate that the idea of development present among El Alto's inhabitants followed a known pattern, which could be traced from dependency theory: industrialisation, the idea of "catching-up" with more developed countries (which resembles an idea of lineal history and progress), and the state as a main actor to promote these tasks (Carballo, 2014). This was a response against the neoliberal reforms that Bolivian governments had undertaken since the mid-1980s, in which transnational companies were identified as the main opponents who controlled Bolivian natural resources and subjugated the government.

On the other hand, this image of Bolivia as underdeveloped does not mean that Bolivians perceive themselves as poor, since natural resources represent the country's wealth in popular discourses. Cipriana Apaza questions this perception of poverty and complains about how people from other countries treat Bolivian migrants:

The wealth is there, (...) we have so many wonders, but nevertheless they called us poor. (...) But looking at reality, thinking, you realise that you don't feel poor at all. You feel at home. (...) We Bolivians welcome people with affection, but we are not welcome. According to what we listen to on the radio and other media (...), no Bolivian is welcome. I don't know why, perhaps people need to know us better.¹⁸⁷

Cipriana shows a resistance against standard views on poverty and wealth, which are perceived as foreign measures, unhomely. Therefore, *alteños* accept only partially the discourses on development based on "catching up" with industrialised and rich countries. This view leads to a negative self-image of impoverishment that they do not subscribe to.

However, this self-perception does not imply that they have no expectations regarding the improvement of their living conditions. In this regard, the defence of industrialisation was not a mere development fetish. The industrialisation of natural resources would provide the state with enough capital to promote basic policies of welfare, translated into the idea of "needs" (*necesidades*). Cipriana herself acknowledges this idea when she talks about the functions of FEJUVE: "the organisation had to defend water, energy; we had to protect the environment. That is to say, the needs that the country, the community, or our neighbourhood zones lack".¹⁸⁸ Felipa Catacora, vice-president of FEJUVE in 2012, says the organisation worked to guarantee the city's needs, such as "basic services, healthcare, education" and jobs.¹⁸⁹ Vicente Fernández sees these needs as the main motivation of *alteños* to participate in the struggle in 2003:

¹⁸⁷ Interview on 24 November 2012.

¹⁸⁸ Interview on 23 November 2012.

¹⁸⁹ Interview on 25 March 2013.

This was because of need. (...) Need for better living conditions, need for decent employment, need for a better future for your sons, need for so many basic issues. There were zones where there was no water, no energy, we used oil lamps, some streets were impassable. It was a difficult situation and people had a huge necessity. So I think that this had motivated people to go out to the streets.¹⁹⁰

Through such a lens, gas also symbolises a sort of development related to domestic facilities rather than only to national progress and industrialisation, since many households had not access to it in 2003 and, when they did, they used bottled gas (*garrafas*). The process of buying the *garrafas* normally involved long queuing and carrying heavy loads across the city, and represented, for *alteños*, an everyday material reality of the lack of industrialisation and the humiliation of not having the same facilities as the countries that received Bolivian gas.¹⁹¹ “We had no piped gas. We had to queue [to buy it] (...). But there was [enough gas] to give to another country. This was a bigger problem than just giving away our resources, because we did not have it ourselves”.¹⁹²

The perception of these basic needs is related to the experience of neighbourhood organisation, the *juntas vecinales*. When moving to a new urbanised zone, the *vecinos* had to take the initiative to obtain funding and to contribute their own work in order to have their basic needs covered, as Luis Flores, who was part of the FEJUVE executive board in 2003, recalls:

When I was 27 years old I was a neighbourhood leader, when I bought a piece of land with my family here in Río Seco, District 4. We build our house to live, there was no electricity, no water, no basic services. (...) So, because I was in the *junta* I had to go and look for services, funding. We founded a school, because there was the need for one for the children to study. We applied for energy first, then drinking water in public taps on every corner. So, these were our first basic services to live as human beings.¹⁹³

This experience of self-construction (*auto-construcción*) contributed to give *alteños* a different perception of citizenship and the way they perceive their rights regarding the state (Lazar, 2008, p. 70). Even though they believe the state is responsible for offering these services, they have an active stake in guaranteeing it through the neighbourhood organisation. Therefore, they are agents – and feel like it – of the improvement of their lives.

Alteños' relationship with the Bolivian state is marked by both engagement and estrangement (Lazar, 2008, p. 117). On one hand, the state is seen as the institution that can provide them with necessary services, such as healthcare and higher education systems. It is

¹⁹⁰ Interview on 23 May 2013.

¹⁹¹ I heard sometimes from Bolivians that I had Bolivian piped gas in my house in São Paulo (which was true) and they did not have it in their own cities. One of the main policies of Morales' administration in terms of public infrastructure was to provide piped gas to households, particularly in El Alto, which celebrated around 65,000 household gas connections in 2015 (Página Siete, 2015).

¹⁹² Cipriana Apaza, interview on 23 November 2012.

¹⁹³ Interview on 24 May 2013.

beyond the community's abilities to provide these services by itself and the state is seen as the best agent to do that. The state represents the possibility of improvement not only at the local level, but also at the national. It is the actor that can undertake changes in industrialisation and production policies, providing the Bolivian state with more capital to invest in public services and to provide Bolivian citizens with better employment. Experience shows, however, that state does not act automatically; it is moved by pressure (at local and national levels), which depends on the ability of the *vecinos* to mobilise. Their relationship with the state is not one between passive and active sides, even though it is not a relationship without power imbalances.

On the other hand, *alteños* demonstrate estrangement from the state and prefer to have it cornered on certain issues. As with many other Bolivian social movements, they value their freedom to act politically and socially and not to be repressed or suffer the state's intervention because of that. There is a long history of resistance – represented by the Indian rebellions and by the organisation of the miners – that they draw on to assert their proud position regarding the Bolivian state and its army, seen many times as “others” that are only here to murder them. This position has appeared since the beginning of the mobilisation in 2003, with the demands for the annulment of the Law of Citizen-Security, which contained measures of criminalisation of social movements and allowed the government to react violently against road blockades. The government of Sánchez de Lozada did not need to have the law approved to undertake the violent operation that led to the killing dozens of people but his subsequent resignation meant that the law and its policies were largely rejected.

Within both dynamics – engagement and estrangement – *alteños* can be seen as representatives of the way Bolivian social movements relate to the state in general. Moreover, their narratives regarding development are framed in a rhetoric that addresses the nation's interests. In order to make sense of the popular demands related to the natural gas debate, social actors from El Alto used a particularly strong narrative frame, a story that represented prototypical characters, a strong demarcation of otherness (against patriotic interests), processes of plundering and situations of unfair balances of resources: the collective memory of the War of the Pacific.

CHAPTER FIVE – THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC

*The population is present,
Bolivia, El Alto, demands the gas
Recover, recover,
Recover, recover¹⁹⁴*

The above lines were sung by activists on 8 October 2003, when the third civic strike organised by FEJUVE started in El Alto.¹⁹⁵ This song makes reference to and replicates the rhythm of the military march *Recuperemos Nuestro Mar* (Let's recover our sea), composed by Orlando Rojas, which became very popular in the second half of the twentieth century and is played by military bands all over the country.¹⁹⁶ The song was written to support Bolivians in their struggle to reclaim the country's former seacoast, lost to Chile in the War of the Pacific (1879). In a similar reference, FEJUVE's resolution that publicly announced the third civic strike included the slogan "let's recover the sea and industrialise the country", identifying the recovery of the seacoast and the nationalisation of natural gas as conditions for the country's industrialisation (FEJUVE, 2003).

In 2003, since both gas and the seacoast were seen as things unfairly "stolen" from Bolivians by foreign and imperialist powers, the narrative on the "recuperation" shifted easily to the gas issue. The future of the nation was seen as dependent on this act of recuperation: Bolivia would only follow her path towards development and progress once the "stolen" resources (either territory or gas) were returned to her. The parallels between sea and gas were made even more obvious by the fact that Chile appeared to be one of the nations that would profit from the export of natural gas.

This chapter covers how the memory of the War of the Pacific appeared as a platform to express the activists' perception of natural resources and national sovereignty during October 2003, how it is present in people's everyday life, through commemorations and schooling, and

¹⁹⁴ In Spanish: "*La población está presente, Bolivia, El Alto, reclama el gas. Recuperar, recuperar. Recuperar, recuperar*".

¹⁹⁵ This was broadcast by Radio Pachamama, a popular and alternative radio station in El Alto, linked to the *Centro de Promoción de la Mujer Gregoria Apaza* (CPMGA), an organisation for women's rights. The radio reported the demonstrations and the army's repression during October 2003. Later, the CPMGA organised a compilation of the radio's programs related to the events in February and October 2003. See Radio Pachamama (2004), Track 3, 3'20".

¹⁹⁶ Rojas' march: "*Recuperemos nuestro mar... Recuperemos el Litoral... Aún a costa de la vida, recuperemos el mar cautivo. La juventud está presente, Bolivia en alto reclama el mar. Trás este siglo de injusticia, morir es digno de tolerar. Recuperar, recuperar, es nuestro grito y voluntad. Recuperar, recuperar, el Litoral y el ancho mar.*" In English it would be: "Let's recover our sea... Let's recover our coastline. Even at the cost of our lives, let's recover the captive sea. Youth is present, Bolivia up high demands the sea. Through this century of injustice, dying is deserving of tolerance. Recover, recover, is our cry and our will. Recover, recover, the coastline and the breadth of the sea."

how it was depicted throughout Bolivian history. These three analytical steps correspond, respectively, to the presentist, everyday and processual approaches presented in the introduction. Compared to the Aymara peasants of Omasuyos, El Alto's activists have a perception of their past that emphasises the events that happened in the republican history of Bolivia, rather than the colonial past.¹⁹⁷ The War of the Pacific, in particular, appeared many times in *alteños'* testimonies, either directly as a motivation for the struggle, since the actors claimed that Chile had "outstanding debts" (*cuentas pendientes*) with Bolivia, or indirectly, when reporting the support of Chilean soldiers during the Bolivian army's violent operations in El Alto or when denouncing Chilean imperialist interests in Bolivian natural gas.¹⁹⁸ Even compared with the Chaco War, fought against Paraguay during the 1930s over the region where most hydrocarbons prospecting fields were later located, the War of the Pacific received much more attention from the activists.¹⁹⁹

As a historical event, the War of the Pacific was fought between Chile, Bolivia and Peru from 1879 to 1884. The underlying cause of the war was the rich deposits of guano and nitrate in the Atacama region (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 31). When the resources were discovered along the Bolivian seacoast in the middle of the nineteenth century, British and Chilean capital managed to explore and profit from them. The area was isolated from the main cities of Bolivia and was much better connected to Chile and Peru via the coast. The population of Antofagasta in 1878, for example, included 6,554 Chileans and only 1,226 Bolivians. In that same year, exports from Atacama reached 28 million pesos, almost fourteen times higher than the Bolivian national income (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 33). In order to retain some of the benefits of the business for Bolivia, President Hilarión Daza decided to increase taxes on the nitrate export by 10 cents per *quintal*. Chile claimed that the new tax was breaking the previous agreement between Chile and Bolivia signed in 1874 and invaded the Littoral department in 1879. Bolivia never managed to retake it, even with the support of Peru, which entered the war because of a military cooperation pact. Bolivia abandoned the war in 1880, but Chile furthered its military offensive until 1884, occupying Peruvian southern provinces, which were also rich in nitrate and guano,

¹⁹⁷ Of the 21 activists interviewed in El Alto, only two made reference to the colonial past and they were specifically contextualising the history of the highland indigenous and peasant people. The lawyer of the families of the victims, Rogelio Mayta, mentions the colonial past to contextualise the struggle of the activists in both El Alto and Omasuyos (interview on 23 March 2013). Cipriana Apaza identifies the Spanish invaders' violence with the rebellious character of highland indigenous people (interview on 23 November 2013).

¹⁹⁸ 13 activists from El Alto explicitly mentioned either the seacoast issue, the presence of Chilean soldiers during October or Chilean imperialist interests.

¹⁹⁹ See discussion on the selection of cases and the absence of some important memories in the methodological notes in the introduction.

and reaching Lima.²⁰⁰ The conflict cost Bolivia 120,000 square kilometres of territory and 400 kilometres of coast line (Presidency of the Republic Bolivia, 2004).

The War of the Pacific was a nineteenth century conflict, of a limited scale when compared to the wars of the twentieth century. With a population of only a couple of millions each, the three countries had armies that ranged between 1,500 and 5,500 men before the conflict, and 6,000 to 32,000 during the war (at the battlefield at any single moment).²⁰¹ Casualties numbered between 15,725 and 21,038, most of them from the Peruvian side.²⁰² 46 years after withdrawing from the War of the Pacific, Bolivia would engage in a much bloodier conflict: at least 250,000 Bolivians were mobilised for the Chaco War and around 52,000 of them died (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 244). In 1904, the Bolivian government settled an agreement with Chile that exchanged the territory occupied by the construction of a railway between La Paz and Arica for the payment of 300,000 sterling pounds and the Bolivian right of free circulation in its former territory and ports (Mesa Gisbert, & Mesa Gisbert, 1997, p. 491).

Far from drawing a line under the seacoast issue, the signature of the agreement only enhanced the popular demand for the seacoast and dissatisfaction with Bolivian political elites. In the twentieth century, as many authors noted, the continuous reference to the lost seacoast has become a defining characteristic of Bolivian nationalism. Danièle Demelas claims that it was actually this loss that allowed the appearance of a long-standing and popular national identification from the end of the nineteenth century onwards (Demelas, 1980, p. 28). According to José Ortega, Bolivian nationalism before the war was based on idealist and abstract territorial, historical and spiritual assumptions. It was the territorial loss caused by the war and other disputes with neighbouring countries, such as Brazil and Paraguay, that “produced fair and passionate aspirations of emancipation that provided the nativist nationalism with a realist and progressive matrix, which was translated into a greater concern for the defence of national resources and for the Indian problem” (Ortega, 1973, p. 1). The combined military and

²⁰⁰ For more comprehensive accounts of the war, see Dunkerley (2003), Farcau (2000), and Sater (2007).

²⁰¹ Dunkerley states that Bolivia rarely had more than 6,000 men at the front. Regarding the population, one of his sources indicates that Chile had 2.2 million, Peru 2.7 million and Bolivia between 1.8 and 2.35 million (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 42). On the sizes of the armies before the war, Sater states that in 1877, the Bolivian army had no more than 1,675 men (2007, p. 54), the Peruvian army had 5,557 men (2007, p. 45) and Chile had around 2,595 (Sater, 2007, p. 59). Mesa Gisbert *et al* present the following numbers for the Battle of Tacna: Chile had 19,000 men, Peru had 6,500 and Bolivia had 5,500 (Mesa et al., 1997, p. 429). After Bolivia withdrew from the war, the battles increased in number of conscripts and casualties. During the offensive towards Lima, Chile had mobilised around 27,000 men (Sater, 2007, p. 263) and Peru defended the city with an army between 25,000 and 32,000 (Sater, 2007, p. 274).

²⁰² These numbers were calculated from the tables published by William F. Sater (2007, pp. 348–349). The casualties from the Allied side (Peru and Bolivia) were highest during the attack of Lima, when between 10,000 and 13,500 Peruvians died (Sater, 2007, p. 349).

diplomatic defeats of Bolivia caused a loss of half of her territory between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth (Baptista Gumucio & Saavedra Weise, 1978a, pp. 10–11) and this, according to Laetitia Perrier Bruslé, is the particularity of Bolivian nationalism. As she puts it, “the lost provinces are at the heart of the [national] collective memory and the coastline is the most significant of them” (Perrier Bruslé, 2013, p. 49).

As a collective memory, the War of the Pacific was part of the state-sponsored activities of remembrance during the whole twentieth century and was still present in Evo Morales’ speech at the inauguration of his third term on 21 January 2015.²⁰³ The lost seacoast is remembered continuously in national celebrations, such the Day of the Sea (*Día del Mar*), in military marches and hymns, in schools, where children are taught about Bolivian former territory, and in monuments and street names. As seen in the first chapter, commemorative ceremonies are particularly effective mnemonic devices, acts of transfer, because they involve a performance of the event being remembered, constantly renewing the emotional ties of present actors with past events through a repetitive narrative (Connerton, 1989, pp. 41–71). To guarantee this iteration, it is very important that this particular remembrance is promoted by long-standing and rooted institutions, such as states or religious bodies. Different from the memory of Tupac Katari, analysed in Chapter Three, Connerton’s characterisation of commemorative ceremonies applies perfectly to the official activities promoted by the Bolivian state to remember the lost seacoast and to promote a contemporary expectation of recovering it.

Nevertheless, in 2003, this memory turned against the government and also against the army, one of the state institutions that has cultivated it most dearly. It appeared in activists’ explanations of how the state was betraying the nation by allying itself with Chile against Bolivian interests. The international claim for a seacoast became a domestic issue and helped activists to build a popular and convincing narrative for the nationalisation and industrialisation of gas.

The next two sections will discuss how the memory of the War of the Pacific played a central role in framing the projects and identities of the *alteño* population regarding the Bolivian nation. Their understanding of the war was marked by two main elements: the idea of a past injustice that troubles national projects for future development; and the depiction of national enemies, Chilean and Bolivian political elites alike, which contributed to the definition of *alteños* themselves as the warriors of the nation. In its final sections, this chapter will analyse how the

²⁰³ Bolivian local press emphasised the claim for sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean as a highlight of his speech (see Layme, 2015).

War of the Pacific is understood in contemporary Bolivia and how it has been depicted since the end of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, 2003 was not the first time the loss of the seacoast played an important role in Bolivian domestic politics.

Unfair war, “stolen” development

Official Bolivian narratives usually depict the War of the Pacific as an unjust episode. The Blue Book, edited by the Bolivian presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004, is a good example of this position: “The conflict was unfair because Chile, aware of its purpose, had armed itself in advance. Bolivia and Peru found themselves almost without war means” (Presidency of the Republic Bolivia, 2004). This perception of the war is, however, crystallised in popular depictions of the war and is far from being only an official position. Most *alteños* activists depict the war as a foreign invasion carried out against a vulnerable country:

There was an outstanding issue [with Chile], because Bolivia had sea, a whole department, the department of the Litoral, but in the 1800s, they launched a conflict because of a tax and Chile invaded our territory. Our country was not summoned to war [*no estaba llamado a hacer guerra*], nothing. So this follows on from generation to generation, that we had our territory stolen.²⁰⁴

Depictions of Chile as an invader or a thief nation are very common. Felix Tancara, an *alteño* who participated in the protests and whose father was a veteran of the Chaco War, compares the two wars and explains why, in Bolivian popular judgement, the contention against Chile is seen as unfair:

The two wars are different. The War of the Pacific wasn’t a war, the Chileans assaulted us. Without declaring a war, they stole Bolivian wealth. While Paraguay declared [war on] the 11 May, (...) Bolivia accepted, so this was an international war. Because of this feeling, the Bolivians demand to return to the Pacific Ocean. Because our country was born with a seacoast and this was cut by the Chileans.²⁰⁵

The testimonies show a common feeling that this event, more than any other event in the Bolivian past, has had deep consequences for the nation’s future. Chile’s occupation of the Bolivian seacoast is seen as something that condemned Bolivia to international isolation. Carlos Rojas expresses this idea that the war was a turning point in the country’s history:

The issue is that we do not have access to the sea. There is a territory that historically, they’ve told us, belonged to Bolivians and after an invasion it was taken from us. This is the reason why we are landlocked and we don’t have access to the sea. Bolivia, after this confinement

²⁰⁴ Roberto Nina, interview on 13 May 2013.

²⁰⁵ Interview on 26 March 2013.

[*enclaustramiento*], cannot have direct commercial access to other countries because it needs first to get to Chile (...). So, we have this historical indignation against Chile, firstly because of the assault they committed and secondly because of this confinement we are suffering.²⁰⁶

The fact that the territory incorporated by Chile after the War of the Pacific has, during the twentieth century, proved to be rich in many other natural resources, not only the guano and nitrates deposits that triggered the war, has also contributed to the Bolivian feeling that the neighbouring country's development was mainly due to the "stolen" resources. The Blue Book lists the lost resources: copper ores, discovered in Chuquicamata, which turned Chile into one of the main copper producer in the world; the already known deposits of guano and nitrate; sulphur, discovered in Ollague; and the "hydrologic" resources of the ocean itself. The book concludes that these resources have "contributed greatly to the development of Chile" (Presidency of the Republic Bolivia, 2004). In a report presented by Bolivia in the annual meeting of the Organisation of the American States (OAS) held in 1979 in La Paz, Alfonso Crespo Rodas sums up this feeling of "stolen development":

Until now, Chile has exported more than 20 million tons of copper (...). With much justification, Salvador Allende qualified Chuquicamata as the 'salary of Chile'. A salary that Bolivia has been paying for a century with the resources provided by mines situated in the territory that was once hers (cited in Montenegro, 1987, pp. 240–241)

Chilean economic dependency on the resources located in the former Bolivian territory during the twentieth century must have been interpreted by Bolivian nationalists as a bitter joke. Other disputes between the two nations also help to underline this feeling of stolen development in a more daily dimension, such as the dispute around the Silala River:

They said they wanted to sell the gas to another country, to Chile. But we didn't want that, because the Chileans have taken the sea, Antofagasta, from us with a war. Now we have a problem with the waters of River Silala, because the Chilean has free access to this water [*gratis está viviendo con esta agua*], does irrigation, produces apples, grapes, kiwi, all these things. Because of that we started to struggle, how is it possible that Goni [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada] wants to sell something that is ours to the Chileans? This is how it has started. Otherwise, there would be no Gas War.²⁰⁷

The testimony above, from Isabel Álvarez, an activist who participated in the mobilisations of October, depicts this popular idea that Chileans are constantly taking advantage of Bolivians. The economic costs imposed by Bolivia's landlocked condition are undeniable and

²⁰⁶ Interview on 13 June 2013.

²⁰⁷ Isabel Álvarez, interview on 6 December 2012. Silala River is a source of dispute between Chile and Bolivia, since canals were built to carry water from its headwater to Chilean territory. In 2009, the Chilean government agreed to pay 50% of the water's value to Bolivia.

the country's demand for sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, based on regional solidarity and integration, is very reasonable.²⁰⁸ This does not stop us from critically exploring and attempting to understand the impact on local ideas of development of this constant national exercise of identification of Bolivian doomed potentialities. Within this particular perspective, development appears as something determined by a country's past and by the contingencies of history, something that could be "stolen" or taken away because of an unfair episode. It is very different from the common sense rhetoric on development, which states that it is a well-deserved situation achieved by hard-working national collectivities.

In fact, *alteños* expressed both of these perspectives on development: one that looked back and explained underdevelopment as a result of unfair historical events, and another that was projected into the future and raised the industrialisation of the country as a main goal to be achieved, as seen in the previous chapter. The element that connected both of these views was restorative action, which would re-establish the balance, break the unfairness, and recover the stolen goods: nationalise the gas and gain access to the seacoast.

A common perception of Chile is illustrated by Luis Flores's characterisation: "What do the Chileans do? Of course, they are our neighbours. But here we have the War of the Pacific, an unfair war in which they have taken us [the seacoast]." ²⁰⁹ *Alteños* talk about the Chileans in an ambivalent way; they are recognised as "neighbours", their relationship should be friendly, but the War of the Pacific stands as a deterrent to cooperation. Vicente Fernández is even milder in his characterisation: "It was not a FEJUVE's policy to be against a country, the fundamental was to recover the natural resources that were being given to other companies, to benefit other countries, rather than our country Bolivia."²¹⁰

The idea of counteracting an unfair situation is also present in the way Bolivians perceive their defeat in the War of the Pacific and what is needed to overcome it as a national collectivity. While remembering war victories is perceived as a common repertoire of official nationalisms around the world, remembering war defeats is looked upon with particular suspicion by historians and academics. The paradigmatic example in this case is Germany after the First World War, whose resentment over the Treaty of Versailles and the country's post-war depression contributed to the emergence of Nazism. Analysing the inter-war ideological representations, George L. Mosse coined the expression "Myth of the War Experience", which was "designed to mask the war and legitimise the war experience". One of the central features

²⁰⁸ Even *The Economist* condemns Chile's "anachronistic" position regarding the maritime claim (*The Economist*, 2003).

²⁰⁹ Interview on 24 May 2013.

²¹⁰ Interview on 23 May 2013.

of this myth was the “cult of the fallen soldier” that combined popular beliefs of martyrdom and resurrection with nationalism. This militarist “cult” was particularly effective in Germany “who had lost the war and had been brought to the edge of chaos by the transition from war to peace” (Mosse, 1990, p. 7).

The ways the War of the Pacific is remembered by activists in El Alto today is very different from how defeat was ideologically reconstructed in inter-war Germany. With the exception of the pre-Chaco War period, Bolivian nationalist reconstruction of the conflict with Chile did not lead to militarism, but to a renewed appeal for justice in the international arena. Since this demand in the League of Nations in the 1920s, the Bolivian state has expressed in multiple ways, either in bilateral negotiations or in international forums, its expectation of recovering sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean. This translates into the idea that Chile has “outstanding debts” with Bolivia, which must be settled so Bolivia can regain the conditions to progress and Chile can be considered a friendly nation. Anti-Chilean sentiments in contemporary Bolivia are not militaristic and are normally raised to attack sectors of the Bolivian society rather than Chileans themselves.

Chileans and the Army

During September and October a rumour was spread in El Alto: Chilean officers were giving orders to the Bolivian army and were coordinating the massacre in the city. “They were masked, we didn’t know for sure. They were not Bolivians, they were Chileans”, says Isabel Álvarez.²¹¹ “Our country was being intervened in at all levels, the army had foreign advisors, they were Chileans”, says Roberto Nina.²¹² Luis Flores remembers:

People said that they [the military] were commanded by Chilean officers, they were not Bolivians. So we said (...) that Goni [Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada] should go, because we are not going to allow that they kill the Bolivian people, just because we’ve asked for the nationalisation of the hydrocarbons.²¹³

Journalists and intellectuals who covered the events in 2003 also reported that rumour. Luis Gómez describes a march from El Alto to La Paz on 19 September in which protestors would say to people who were looking, astounded, at them (the watchers, *los mirones*) that they were Chileans (Gomez, 2004, p. 39), probably because they were seen as traitors for not fighting for the gas. Pablo Mamani recalls that, during the intense days of October, people denounced the

²¹¹ Interview on 23 November 2012

²¹² Interview on 13 May 2013.

²¹³ Interview on 24 May 2013.

Sánchez de Lozada government saying it was the “establishment of a Chilean government in La Paz” (Mamani Ramirez, 2004, p. 144).

There is at least one clear historical precedent of foreign officers directly coordinating the bloodshed of political activists in Bolivia: during the *coup d'état* of Luis García Meza in 1980, his chief of information, Luis Arce Gómez, was assisted by the Argentine military. Their presence in Bolivia was well-known and they were accused of advising the group of paramilitaries who tortured and murdered the priest Luis Espinal, director of *Aquí*, a left-wing magazine that was denouncing the preparations for the *coup* (Dunkerley, 1984, p. 280). Later, after the *coup*, they were also involved in the attack of the COB headquarters, which killed Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, among other important left-wing leaders (Dunkerley, 1984, pp. 288–290).

The information on the presence of Chilean advisors in 2003 was more diffuse, though, and it was hard to tell sometimes whether people were talking about actual Chileans or about someone who held anti-Bolivian positions. Lazar narrates one episode in which the secretary of the Federation of Street Traders of El Alto scolded one affiliated member who wanted to miss a parade by saying: “No, there is no permission [to be absent]. As citizens of La Paz [*paceño citizens*] we have to honour our fallen heroes. It’s not like you’re Chilean, are you [*acaso eres chileno*]?” (Lazar, 2008, p. 190). This example shows how all sorts of behaviours considered self-interested and anti-civic could be labelled as “Chilean” in the daily interactions of El Alto’s political life.

As seen above, institutions of the Bolivian state, particularly the army and the government, were identified with the Chileans during 2003. While it is easy to understand why Sánchez de Lozada, who was raised in the United States and speaks Spanish with a foreign accent, was called *gringo*, it is harder to explain the identification of the Bolivian military with the Chileans, since it is the main state institution to cultivate the memory of the lost seacoast department. As the testimony of Luis Flores shows, the violence of the army against the civil population was understood as an action of patriotic treason; only Chileans could kill Bolivian civilians like that. At a discursive level, the line between national and foreign is no longer defined by being born in a country, by having or not Bolivian citizenship, but rather, by acting based on patriotic duty; by not betraying national interests.

When pointing out the presence of Chileans as advisors, protestors were particularly questioning of the senior officers of the army, those who held command positions. Rank-and-file privates were treated with more sympathy and this is illustrated by the story of a young soldier (*soldadito*) who was killed by his superior because he refused to open fire on protestors. “A *soldadito* rebelled, turned against his superiors [*se ha hecho al revés*], ‘I can’t kill my people’, and his sergeant or captain shot him”, recalls one activist. Another says: “I remember when they

killed a *soldadito* here in the bridge and his instructor, I couldn't see his military rank because I was far away, held him, shot him and killed him". In other depictions, the story of the *soldadito* was turned into a collective fate: "I was there in 2003 - when they killed the *soldaditos*, when Goni escaped - with sticks, stones, everything. (...) One commander said 'shoot', but a *soldadito* rebelled, he didn't want to shoot. So they shot the *soldaditos*, they died".²¹⁴ Apart from these oral testimonies, this story is not very well documented, and a soldier who died on 12 October 2003 does not appear in the list of casualties published by the Commission for Justice and Peace (Auza & Espinoza, 2004).²¹⁵ A civil action held against Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and Carlos Sánchez Berzaín by the relatives of the victims in Florida only mentions the case, stating the following: "on information and belief, another soldier who refused to fire on civilians was killed by one of his superiors" (Kurzban, 2013, p. 31).

Despite the lack of media or judicial covering of this event, it is clear that it is a popular story in El Alto. It echoes the execution of the Chaco conscripts who were accused of pacifism, desertion, or of having harmed themselves to be discharged from service (Dunkerley, 2003, pp. 251–252). The story of the *soldadito* represents the innocence of the rank-and-file conscripts, who had to follow orders and were treated with the same violence that commanders dispensed to the enemies, be they adversary troops or civil activists. Julio Quilali, who was part of FEJUVE's executive board in 2003, explains how people perceive the army and the differences between high and low ranks:

People are not part of the military command. Do common people [*gente del pueblo*] have access to military school? Are colonels, generals, captains, lieutenants, second lieutenants part of the common people? They are not from the people, they are from the wealthy class. Of course, the *soldaditos*, the body of the army, they are from the common people. They are the ones that are commanded, kicked, shot, battered. The others, they have privileges, and until we break from this, we will still live under these conditions. This is the Bolivian army.²¹⁶

These popular depictions of the Bolivian army resonate with some well-known intellectual depictions of it. In his famous article *Las Masas en Noviembre* (The Masses in November) Zavaleta Mercado argues that every army has a double character: one that is a result of the processes of centralisation and nationalisation of each state and another, the classic one, whose existential reason is fear of the "sad night" (*noche triste*). In the Bolivian case, the function of the classic army is "to resist Indian siege, and the April 9th [day of the 1952 revolution] is only the actualisation of this atavism called Katari. Bolivia is, under this perspective, what has remained inside the city walls, sieged by the Indian raid" (Zavaleta Mercado, 2009, p. 259). This

²¹⁴ Sources that mentioned the soldier story were anonymised.

²¹⁵ This list, however, managed to gather data on 40 of around a total of 60 casualties.

²¹⁶ Interview on 13 June 2013.

is the army *alteños* identified with the “wealthy class” and with the Chilean advisors. The first army, the one identified with the *soldaditos*, is related to the process of “nationalisation” mainly because, among other features, the majority of conscripts in Bolivia are of peasant and poor origins.²¹⁷

James Dunkerley points out, while analysing the events in October and also recovering Zavaleta Mercado’s distinction, that the overthrow of Sánchez de Lozada did not “take the form of direct armed attack on the institutions of that state”. He calls our attention to a symbolic moment on 16 October 2003 that received little media coverage: the embrace of a colonel and a miner in Patacamaya, when “the army allowed 58 trucks of workers through to the seat of government to demand the removal of the president (who resigned immediately upon hearing this news)” (Dunkerley, 2007, p. 139). The events of October 2003 underline both the conflict between the “common people” and the army and their re-encounter.

The rumours around foreign advisors can be better understood against this background. The Chilean spectrum represented the otherness that was needed by the activists to make sense of their Bolivianness. In a similar process, Paulo Drinot analysed the constructions of Self and Other in the comment section of a YouTube video depicting the War of the Pacific. Analysing comments coming from Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina, he found that:

What YouTube reveals is the fact that the war is constantly refought as a war of ideas about the Peruvian/Bolivian/Chilean Other and Peruvian/Bolivian/Chilean Self that are interwoven with understandings of the causes, process, outcome and, indeed, legacy, of the war. For Peruvians, Bolivians and Chileans (and the odd Argentine), ideas of the war serve to construct the Other and the Self. At the same time, ideas of the Other and of the Self serve to construct the war (Drinot, 2011, pp. 381–382).

The recovering of the War of the Pacific during October 2003 operated in a similar fashion in terms of identifying the national Self and the Other. Moreover, the rumours on Chilean presence during the mobilisation show an internalisation of the Other to depict local elites, as well as an internalisation of the war narrative to depict domestic conflicts. Identifying the army with the Chileans also allowed the mobilised sectors to blame foreign intervention and to make peace with the military in a second moment, when Sánchez de Lozada was not the head of state anymore. While *alteños* identified the neoliberal government as traitorous and pro-Chilean, Aymara peasants from Omasuyos called it *q’ara*, a reference to a long-standing ethnic conflict. Both groups are tracing the limits of Bolivianness through this identification process, which is thought of as representing the interests of the majority of people in the country. One

²¹⁷ The two popular leaders that appeared during this period – Evo Morales and Felipe Quispe – have had experiences as conscripts.

of the differences between them is that extinguishing Chilean elements from the government appears to be a much easier task than extinguishing *q'ara* ones, as the repeated discussion on Evo Morales' "*entorno blancoide*" (white surroundings) testifies.²¹⁸ Another difference is that the memories of the War of the Pacific and anti-Chilean sentiments are far from unique to El Alto's activists, since the recalling of the war defeat is a rooted institutional and social practice, which will be now the focus of this analysis.

Parades, schools and maps

On 23 March 2013, Bolivian authorities celebrated the 134th anniversary of the defence of Calama. They carried the mortal remains of the national hero Eduardo Abaroa from San Francisco Basilica to the square named in his honour in the neighbourhood of Sopocachi, in a procession of about two kilometres through the Prado, the city's main avenue. Eduardo Abaroa was a civil volunteer who organised the resistance of Calama, a city in the former Bolivian seacoast department, against the invading Chilean troops in 1879.²¹⁹ The Day of the Sea (*Día del Mar*) is a state parade, with the participation of the military and civil servants of all levels. In 2013, Evo Morales and Alvaro García Linera, the Vice-President, headed the procession. Military bands played marches that recalled the lost seacoast during the whole activity and young soldiers cried out the hymns, and many people watching the parade sang along with them. The marches were very popular; among them was *Recuperemos Nuestro Mar*, sung by *alteños* in October and the Naval March, which states: "Antofagasta, beautiful land; Tocopilla, Mejillones at the sea; with Cobija and Calama; to Bolivia once again they will return". There was a feeling of collective longing, as if people were singing for the motherland in a period of lengthy exile.

²¹⁸ For an explanation of "*entorno blancoide*" see Mamani Ramírez (2007) and Quisbert (2007). For a critical review of it, see Stefanoni (2007).

²¹⁹ According to popular knowledge, Abaroa's last words were: "Surrender, me? Let your grandmother surrender, dammit!" (*¿Rendirme yo? ¡Que se rinda su abuela, carajo!*).



Figure 3 – Soldiers sing the Naval March in La Paz, on 23 March 2013.

The emotional ties that commemorative celebrations can maintain through the iteration of narratives and performance through time is something explored by Connerton, as mentioned in Chapter One. Connerton argues that these celebrations have a “stylised, stereotyped and repetitive” character, with a strong element of invariance. They are important to the people participating in them because they offer meaning to the “whole life of a community” (Connerton, 1989, pp. 44–45). Because of this formalism and performativity, these ceremonies are effective “mnemonic devices”, re-enacting “prototypical persons and events” with calendrical, verbal and gestural repetitions, “causing to reappear what has disappeared”. The celebrations remind the community of its identity through a “master narrative”, which is “more than a story told and reflected on”, but “a cult enacted”, an image of the past “conveyed and sustained by ritual performances” (Connerton, 1989, pp. 61–70).

The recurring theme of the lost seacoast also appears in other official parades. On Independence Day, celebrated every 6 August, schoolchildren march representing the nine Bolivian departments “with a tenth child veiled in black representing the Lost Littoral” (Luykx, 1999, p. 30). The narrative of the War of the Pacific is part of the daily experience of all Bolivian schoolchildren and the fact that Chile is an “enemy nation” is taken for granted. Activists of El Alto, when explaining why they would not accept that Bolivian gas should benefit Chile, claimed that they have learnt that at school, as has every Bolivian.²²⁰

²²⁰ Florian Calcina says “We, Bolivians, have been enemies of Chile since we were born. Everybody knows it. Chile is our enemy because it has taken our sea, we don’t have sea access. This is taught at schools, to recover the sea is our obligation” (interview on 22 May 2013). Julio Quilali says “The problem with Chile is... well, this is the historical knowledge shared in our schools. They know what happens in Chile, they know that the Chileans have always been against our interests” (interview on 13 June 2013).

Aurolyn Luykx, in an ethnographic study of a rural teacher training school (*normal*) in a community in the highlands of the department of La Paz, identifies the theme of the “besieged sovereignty” as very common in the classrooms (1999, p. 136). Alleged Chilean contemporary incursions into Bolivian territory and the denunciation of “hostile forces plotting the disintegration of the nation” were recurring lesson topics. “You all know there are countries that like to think of Bolivia as a historical error, to say that it shouldn’t exist! That each one should take over a piece of Bolivia. That’s what’s happened throughout our history: all our neighbouring countries have always taken something from us”, said one of the teachers while criticising the potential fragmentation of the policies of decentralisation of the time (Luykx, 1999, pp. 136–137). Andrew Canessa narrates a very similar situation during a lesson on political geography in a rural community in the Larecaja province, in La Paz department: “He [the teacher] proceeded to go through all the departments in this way and then the neighbouring countries, bemoaning the fact that every one of Bolivia’s neighbours had taken a piece of Bolivian territory at one time or other in its history” (Canessa, 2012b, p. 193).

Besides the lessons on political geography, many schoolchildren start their days singing hymns and marches dedicated to the lost sea (Luykx, 1999, p. 30). “I studied the four first years of high school in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and I remember that many times a month, perhaps every week, the students of La Salle sang in the courtyard an anthem claiming the Bolivian lost sea”, once wrote Mario Vargas Llosa (2004).²²¹

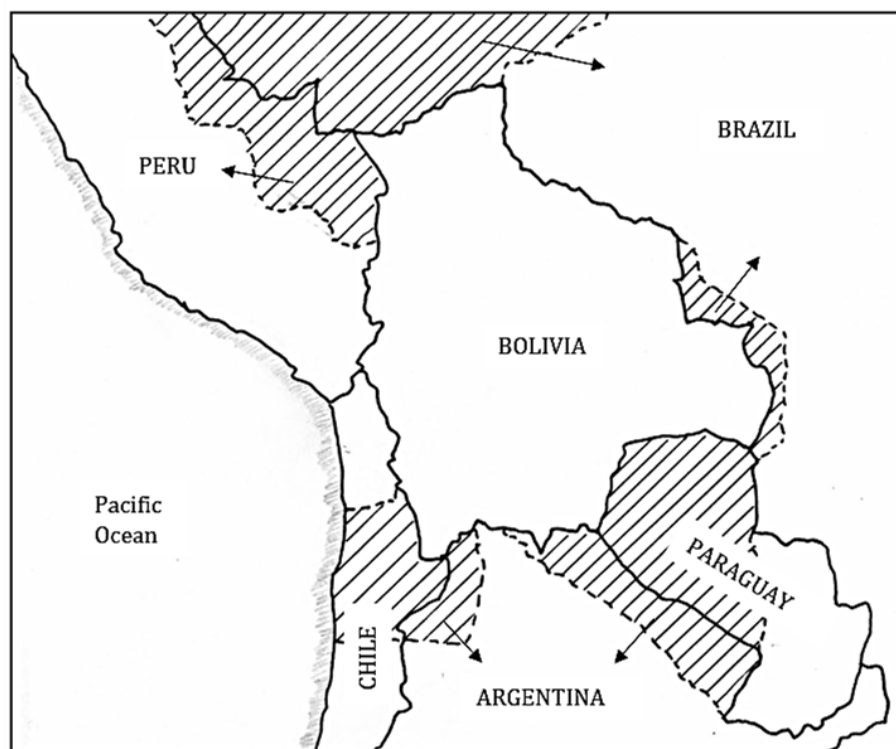
The painful absence of something vital is one of the most common representations of the loss of the seacoast. It is present not only in literature but also in historiographic works, such as Querejazu Calvo, who claims that the Bolivian maritime claim is not a simple patriotic feeling (*patriotero*), but “a manifestation of a need for life and progress of an imprisoned nation”, the “expression of an unavoidable request from geography”, “the obedience to a telluric mandate of the mountains which should re-establish the umbilical link to the mother from whose bowels they emerged” (Querejazu Calvo, 1979, p. 790). Perrier Bruslé calls our attention to the vocabulary that applies metaphors of the body to the territory, with extensive uses of the ideas of mutilations and bleeding scars, generating “empathy by equating the suffering of the Bolivian territory to the suffering of the flesh” (Perrier Bruslé, 2013, pp. 64–65). There are some parallels with the myth of the Incarrí revised in Chapter Three in relation to Tupac Katari, to the idea of reconstituting the old body in order to start the new.

²²¹ The intensity of this childhood memory is proven by the fact that he finishes his article agreeing with Hugo Chávez, who had supported the Bolivian claim earlier that year: “I also will take a dip in the cold waters of the Bolivian sea” (Vargas Llosa 2004).

Different from the memory of Tupac Katari, whose spatial depictions are much more related to physical experiences of dislocation between the countryside and city, depictions of mutilation related to the seacoast have an immediate relationship with notions of territory that are typical of modern abstraction, translated onto a map. Benedict Anderson argues that the map was a key institution allowing the imagination of the nation in terms of a bounded territorial space (Anderson, 2006, p. 177). He cites the study of Thongchai Winichakul on the changes of territorial representations in Thailand at the end of the nineteenth century:

In terms of most communication theories and common sense, a map is a scientific abstraction of reality. A map merely represents something which already exists objectively "there." In the history I have described, this relationship was reversed. A map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent... It had become a real instrument to concretize projections on the earth's surface. A map was now necessary for the new administrative mechanisms and for the troops to back up their claims... The discourse of mapping was the paradigm which both administrative and military operations worked within and served (Winichakul cited in Anderson, 2006, pp. 177–178).

In the Bolivian case, people not only imagine their nation's territory through a modern map, they also learn in school, with the same sort of communication device, about what this territory should be. The conceptualisation of the map as a "model for", instead of a model of, is even clearer in this context: the map of Bolivia with a demarcation of its lost provinces is a powerful symbolic tool to communicate a feeling of being oppressed by the neighbouring nations and of isolation.



Map 3 – Territories lost by Bolivia since 1825

Military commemorative parades, schools and maps are official mechanisms with which the state promotes collective memories, but they are also “acts of transfer”, as defined by Connerton (1989), that are rooted in people’s everyday life. Given the high participation and the emotional attachment of Bolivian society in these activities, it is reasonable to suggest that the lost seacoast and the War of the Pacific are much more than mere expressions of official nationalism. As stated earlier, the October events are evidence of how a rooted memory like that can be easily turned against a government and state institutions. The next section will go through the brief history of this memory and how literary and intellectual depictions of it developed over the century.

The War of the Pacific since 1879

During the war, a considerable number of booklets with accounts, diaries and manifestos, written by participants in Bolivian military campaigns, started to be published in the main Bolivian cities.²²² They were part of the context of the war, since there were intense debates among the political elites over the continuation of the conflict. After the defeat in Tacna, the Bolivian army retreated and never re-engaged in combat; a truce with Chile was finally negotiated in 1884 (Dunkerley, 2003, pp. 53–56).

One of the most important intellectuals of the war generation was José Vicente Ochoa, who was one of the first to promote the memory of Abaroa as a national hero: while in the municipal council of La Paz in 1892, he ordered the construction of his monument on the Prado promenade (Gerl & Chávez, n.d.), and his book on the hero’s life was explicitly intended to be distributed in schools.²²³ Other famous intellectuals who were involved in the war discussions were the historian Gabriel René Moreno, who played the role of intermediary in a failed peace

²²² Arturo Costa de la Torre edited two volumes in 1980 bringing together many of these early publications, such as an account of the battle of Calama by Andrés Lizardo Taborga, who participated in the city’s resistance, already published in 1879; the testimony of Colonel Miguel Aguirre, published in 1880; the manifesto of Colonel Rufino Carrasco, published in 1880; and reports and diaries of General Narciso Campero (1980).

²²³ Ochoa wrote a book about Eduardo Abaroa (1892), and a diary of the war (1899). Abaroa’s first monument on the Prado disappeared in 1909, when radical urbanisation reforms had taken place in the Prado (Gerl & Chávez, n.d.).

negotiation in 1879 and Nataniel Aguirre, writer and politician who was Minister of War in Campero's new government and negotiated the truce in 1884.²²⁴

In 1904, under Liberal Party rule, Bolivia signed the controversial peace treaty with Chile and a couple of books were published in this context, such as the works of Alberto Gutiérrez.²²⁵ In this same year, the war was depicted by Alcides Arguedas in his first novel, *Pisagua*, which was the only Bolivian novel on the War of the Pacific at least until 1976, when *Guano Maldito* (Damned Guano) appeared. The argument stretches from the fall of Melgarejo in 1871 until battle of Pisagua in 1879 (Arguedas, 1978).

After the First World War, Bolivia saw an opportunity to demand the revision of the treaty at the recently founded League of Nations, claiming that it had been imposed by force, that Chile was not complying with it and that the situation of complete territorial isolation of Bolivia was a constant threat of war in the region (Botelho Gosálvez, 1968, pp. 47–49). This change in the international arena boosted other Bolivian studies of the war and the seacoast, and most of this second generation of intellectuals dedicated to the Pacific issue served in the Bolivian diplomatic corps and were directly involved in multilateral and bilateral negotiations between Chile and Bolivia.²²⁶

Besides the post-war international context, these publications also followed a change in the local political context. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Liberal Party was constantly criticised for its “pragmatic” policy regarding Chile and the seacoast, which gave priority to mining interests, the construction of railways and access to the seacoast through Arica and Tacna, former Peruvian territories controlled by Chileans at that time. In addition, the liberal government failed to retain Acre from Brazil in 1903, which helped to create the image of liberal inefficiency in defending the country's sovereignty. Thus, the liberals suffered a split in 1914

²²⁴ Moreno's book, *Daza y las Bases Chilenas de 1879*, originally published in 1880, was reedited in 1938. Nataniel Aguirre's volume, *Bolivia en la Guerra del Pacífico*, was published in 1883. Both were cited by Querajazu Calvo (1979).

²²⁵ Alberto Gutiérrez was a diplomat and signed the treaty of 1904 in Santiago as a representative of the Bolivian government. He published a volume on the treaty in 1905 (cited by Figueroa Pla, 1992, p. 35) and later published other volume in 1912, *La Guerra de 1879*, which was revised in 1920 and republished later in the 1970s (1976).

²²⁶ Daniel Sánchez Bustamante published *Bolivia: Su Estructura y Sus Derechos en el Pacífico* in 1919, which was also republished during the 1970s (Sánchez Bustamante, 1979). Florián Zambrana participated, together with Franz Tamayo and others, in the Bolivian delegation that presented the demand at the League of Nations. He wrote *La demanda de Bolivia ante la Liga de las Naciones* in 1922, cited by Botelho Gosálvez (1968). Eduardo Diez de Medina published *La cuestión del Pacífico y la Política Internacional de Bolivia* in 1923, cited by Botelho Gosálvez (1968). Jaime Mendoza was probably the most important author of this period and his essay, *El Factor Geográfico en la Nacionalidad Boliviana*, which first appeared in 1925, was very influential during the twentieth century and was partially republished in the 1970s (Mendoza, 1978).

with the creation of the Republican Party. One of the main differences between the two groups was the seacoast topic, since the republicans were *reivindicacionistas*: they did not recognise the peace treaty of 1904 and demanded the restoration of the former Bolivian territory (Dunkerley, 2003, pp. 105–151; Lorini, 2006, pp. 110–115).

The republicans organised a successful coup in 1920, which received the support of sectors of the army. Juan Albarracín notes that the foreign press was unanimous in identifying the maritime claim as key for the coup on 12 July, citing the following lines from *The Times*: “the current revolution is a repudiation of Montes [the liberal leader] foreign policy” (1972, p. 365).²²⁷ The Chileans, aware of the position of the new government on the seacoast issue, mobilised around 5,000 men to guard the borders but the republicans acted quickly to decrease the tension (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 148).

Irma Lorini studies the role of a publication promoted by republicans called *Bolivia*. The magazine was a main vehicle for the *reivindicacionista* position, where republican intellectuals criticised the former liberal governments for their policies. She mentions an article by Mendoza López, published in 1922, in which the writer accuses the liberals of opening a party office in Santiago and criticises a diplomat who states his worries on the Chilean position after the republican seizure of power in 1920, who acted “as if the actions of internal sovereignty of the Republic were dependent on her secular enemy” (Mendoza López, cited by Lorini, 2006, p. 123). The similarities of this argument with the ones that appeared in 2003 are remarkable.

Under republican rule, Bolivia suffered many economic crises, linked to the ups and downs of the tin market, and with an increasing presence of the army in domestic affairs. Supported by tin mining interests, the governments of Bautista Saavedra and Hernando Siles counted on the army to suppress many revolts in the mining centres and in the countryside (Dunkerley, 2003, pp. 154–192). The multiplication of conflicts with Paraguay on the southern borders was answered by public opinion with militarism and, while the Siles government was reluctant to start a war in 1928 (Dunkerley, 2003, pp. 183–184), Daniel Salamanca, his successor in 1931, was willing to do so. He considered the war with Paraguay to be a “trial by fire”; the country needed a “victorious war” in order to counteract the “history of international disasters” and the increasingly pessimistic Bolivian character (cited by Dunkerley, 2003, p. 207).

The Chaco War lasted until 1935. Almost a hundred thousand people died from both countries, turning it into one of the bloodiest international wars in Latin America. Bolivia, which entered the conflict convinced it would allow her an exit to the Atlantic Ocean through a

²²⁷ Albarracín argues, however, that the central feature of the 1920 coup was a reaction against the power of the tin magnate Simón Patiño promoted by a rival family, Aramayo, rather than differences around the maritime claim (1972, pp. 365–366).

navigable river, had to cease hostilities when Paraguayan forces were threatening to occupy Bolivian lowland territories. It is not surprising that, after the armistice and during the peace conference of the Organisation of American States in 1936, the Bolivian representative, Enrique Finot, argued that the landlocked condition was a significant cause of discontent in the country that would always threaten regional peace (Figuerola Pla, 1992, pp. 52–53).

This war deeply affected all Bolivian society. Because of the massive conscription, mainly among the peasant population, the army started to be seen as a popular institution instead of just a tool of oligarchic groups and the war as an event that created the nation. Dunkerley identifies the shadow of the Chaco experience in the idea of a “popular army”, evoked by parties and progressive social groups in order to gain support for an institution that was “increasingly divided along different ideological and political lines” and, “by that time, very often present in the centre of the political stage” (Dunkerley, 2003, p. 262).

Compared to the 1920s, the period from the Chaco War until the beginning of the 1960s was not specifically marked by discussions over the Pacific seacoast. Most of the governments of this period invested in a politics of good relations with Chile in order to renegotiate the terms of the 1904 treaty and to obtain access to the seacoast. Because the former agreement of free circulation did not include arms, and that affected the Bolivian position during the Chaco War, Chile and Bolivia signed a new treaty in 1937 to guarantee the free circulation of all goods (Botelho Gosálvez, 1968, p. 57). At the beginning of the 1950s, a bilateral negotiation was started to exchange a Bolivian seaport for the water resources in Lake Titicaca, which would provide energy and irrigation for projects in northern Chile. The negotiations did not progress, since Peruvian authorities expressed their disagreement with using the resources of the binational lake (Botelho Gosálvez, 1968, pp. 58–61; Figuerola Pla, 1992, pp. 58–68).

On 23 March 1952, the mortal remains of Eduardo Abaroa were repatriated to La Paz, with ceremonies involving the armies of both countries. On the occasion, a second monument for the hero was inaugurated in his square in La Paz and the president declared the date a national holiday.²²⁸ Since then, every *Día del Mar* has been celebrated with a procession of state authorities carrying Abaroa’s mortal remains through the main streets of the city of La Paz up to his statue in Sopocachi. According to Carlos Mesa, this date is a “referential that brings a model and example”, since Abaroa was “a civilian, a man with few resources (...) that was ready to leave

²²⁸ The monument was made by Emiliano Luján, the same artist who created the controversial monument of the Unknown Soldier in La Paz and the statue of Tupac Katari in Ayo Ayo in the 1970s. The national holiday was declared on 14 February 1952, anniversary of the invasion of Antofagasta (Decreto Ley N° 2976).

everything to defend this piece of the fatherland”, depicting a commitment to “the country that he perceived in this seacoast”.²²⁹

Víctor Paz Estenssoro, the first president after the National Revolution in 1952, had written in 1950 that “the problem of the port is not a priority. The common statement that our backwardness stems mainly from the lack of sea access is not only puerile, but also tendentious, since it seeks to draw attention away from the truly causes of Bolivian stagnation” (cited by Figueroa Pla, 1992, p. 498). The relationship with Chile was so friendly that, in 1955, Paz Estenssoro and Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, the Chilean president, signed agreements for economic cooperation and for the construction of an oil pipeline between Sicasica and Arica, without a single mention of the seacoast claim. Most of the works that appeared in this period were again from diplomats or politicians of the period, such as the work of Roberto Prudencio, Juan José Vidaurre and Alberto Ostría Rodríguez, who were interested in presenting arguments for or depicting the current negotiations with Chile.²³⁰

The situation changed at the end of the 1950s, when the discussion over a Chilean plan to divert the River Lauca (shared by both countries) for irrigation purposes increased tensions and resulted in severed diplomatic relations in 1962 (Figueroa Pla, 1992, pp. 68–78). The hostilities were translated into academic literature, with Chilean historians defending the thesis that Bolivia had actually never had a seacoast and boosting an intense reaction from their Bolivian peers. Many books appeared in Bolivia in the 1960s counteracting this thesis; of these, the work of Raúl Botelho Gosálvez and his *Breve Historia del Litoral Boliviano* (Short History of the Bolivian Seacoast) is among the most important.

The diplomatic relationship was restored during the dictatorships of Augusto Pinochet and Hugo Bánzer in 1975. The “Charaña Embrace” marked the beginning of a new round of negotiations over the seacoast in the two countries, in which Chile demonstrated its will to cede a territorial strip at its northern borders, as long as Bolivia ceded other territories in exchange. The negotiation met with resistance from Peruvian authorities and from Bolivian public opinion, which did not easily accept the idea of ceding territories to Chile, and Bánzer severed diplomatic

²²⁹ Mesa expresses this view in his documentary *Los Caminos del Mar*, released in 2009 (seventh part, 3’20” to 4’30”) (Mesa Gisbert, Espinoza, & Valdivia, 2009).

²³⁰ Roberto Prudencio published *El Problema Marítimo de Bolivia* in 1951, cited by Botelho Gosálvez (1968). Alberto Ostría Rodríguez participated in the negotiations with Chile in 1950 and wrote *Una obra y un destino. La política internacional de Bolivia después de la Guerra del Chaco*, published in 1946, and reedited in 1953. Some excerpts of this book were published in the anthology on geopolitics by Mariano Baptista Gumucio and Agustín Saavedra Weise (1978b). Juan José Vidaurre published *Puerto para Bolivia* in 1950, cited by Botelho Gosálvez (1968).

relationships in 1978 again (Figueroa Pla, 1992, pp. 103–128).²³¹ According to the Chilean diplomat and historian Uldaricio Figueroa Pla, the negotiation helped to undermine Bánzer's popularity and contributed to his fall a couple of months later, even if the diplomatic break-up had had some effect in regaining his popular support (Figueroa Pla, 1992, pp. 118–119). The Bolivian historian Edgar Oblitas Fernández exemplifies the sort of local criticism depicted by Figueroa Pla, when he states that the Charaña agreement only favoured Pinochet, in a moment in which he was internationally isolated because of human rights abuses, and that the diplomatic break-up “does not exempt Bánzer of his historical responsibility; and should be interpreted as an admission of guilt” (Oblitas Fernández, 1978, p. 11).

The next year, 1979, marked the centenary of the war. On 14 February 1979, the whole country stopped for five minutes of silence in remembrance of the Chilean invasion of Antofagasta. Thomas Abercrombie was in K'ulta, an Aymara community in Southeast Oruro, that year and participated in the celebrations of 6 August, Bolivian Independence Day. The *corregidor*, the formal authority of the canton, gave a speech which included “allusions to the sacrifices of the country's soldiers and to hopes of a recuperation of its seacoast” (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 91). Children marched dressed as *colorados*, a special presidential regiment that protagonised the battle of Alto de la Alianza, the most important combat Bolivia fought during the War of the Pacific. Even though the celebration lacked the “intensity” of religious festivities, “it was clear that people took their membership in the idea called Bolivia seriously”, states Abercrombie (1998, p. 93). He also remembers that, during that year, it was common to listen to a radio spot of breakers washing over a beach, followed by a pledge to recover the sea (Abercrombie, 1998, p. 456).

In the context of the centenary, many former publications were republished and new historical accounts appeared. Oblitas Fernández's book, *Historia Secreta de la Guerra del Pacífico* (Secret History of the War of the Pacific), was published in 1978. The following year, the historian and diplomat Roberto Querejazu Calvo published his *Guano, Salitre, Sangre* (Guano, Nitrate, Blood) (1979), which also has become a classic study of the topic in Bolivia. The newspaper *Última Hora* published a collection of original and republished works to celebrate the centenary. Finally, many rare publications from the period of the war were republished in two volumes in 1980, edited by Arturo Costa de la Torre (1980).

²³¹ According to the additional terms of the Treaty of Lima (1929) between Chile and Peru, each country had to consult the other in the case of ceding part of the territories in dispute (the provinces of Arica or Tacna) to a third party. In the case of the Charaña negotiations, Peru put forward a counter-proposal, which included a territory with shared sovereignty by the three countries, but Chile refused it (Figueroa Pla, 1992, p. 112).

In 1979, La Paz hosted the annual meeting of the Organisation of American States (OAS), under the provisional government of Wálter Guevara Arze. Placards on the streets of La Paz showed hostility against the Chilean delegation (Figuerola Pla, 1992, p. 135). Under these favourable conditions, the Bolivian delegation succeeded in having approved a note from the assembly stating that the maritime issue between the two countries was of hemispheric interest and urging for a dialogue that would grant Bolivia sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2014, p. 98).

Meanwhile, the issue of the seacoast gained more literary and artistic expression. During the 1950s, Oscar Cerruto had already published two poetry collections with references to the maritime claim.²³² In 1976, Joaquín Aguirre Lavayén published his novel *Guano Maldito* (Damned Guano) (1976), which combined historical narrative with fiction and was, together with Arguedas's *Pisagua*, one of the only Bolivian literary accounts of the war (Zamora Pizarro, 2011). *Felipe Delgado*, written by Jaime Sáenz in 1979 and considered one of the most important novels of Bolivia, depicts an emotional visit of the main character to Antofagasta and all the conflictive issues expressed by the lost seacoast (2007, p. 300). In 1984, the first Bolivian movie depicting the war, *Amargo Mar* (Bitter Sea), appeared. The director, Antonio Eguino, worked closely with historians of the war, particularly Edgar Oblitas, and the movie reflected the historical debates about the war during that time. Eguino said he was directly motivated by the centenary of the war in 1979 and that the movie became the "most polemical film made in Bolivia":

(...) during its exhibition, the polemic was so big that practically every day there were articles published in favour or against it. And every day the discussions were around a historical event (...) that I considered the most tragic event that Bolivia had to live through in all its history. And the easy explanation that was given in the history was that we were a little poor country and the Chileans were the bad guys who took the coast and that unfortunately we didn't have resources, that our men went to fight with courage and died for that cause, and thus we were left in a landlocked country since then. The truth was that Bolivia had been entirely careless about its coast. (...) Then I think the film focus on that responsibility, the people and politicians at the time of the episode" (Eguino cited in Sánchez-H., 1999, p. 122).

In 1985, Paz Estenssoro became Bolivian president for the third time. He promoted a "fresh-approach" to the conflict with Chile and demonstrated his will to advance an agenda of negotiations. In an initial meeting in Montevideo, Bolivia presented two proposals but a couple of months later, Chile rejected the proposals and suspended the negotiations (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2014, p. 47). Since the late 1980s, new studies have been published on

²³² *Cifra de las rosas y siete cantares* (1957) y *Patria de sal cautiva* (1958), both republished in a recent compilation of his poetry (Cerruto, 2007).

the seacoast issue, particularly the works of Jorge Gumucio Granier, Aguirre Lavayén and Walter Montegro, covering the diplomatic history of the Bolivian claim.²³³

Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, the relationship between the two countries had remained the same, with no significant advances towards the reestablishment of diplomatic relations and Bolivian sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean. During this period, the Bolivian government announced new reserves of natural gas and meetings between the Bolivian and Chilean authorities were held in order to negotiate a possible export of the resources through a Chilean port. As we saw in Chapter Four, this was the context in which the Gas War happened in 2003. This was the first time that the issue appeared with such strength in a social mobilisation in Bolivia, even if we consider that recovering the sea was not actually the demand of the movement and that there had been, in the past, other popular demonstrations over the seacoast.

The government of Carlos Mesa, which followed Sánchez de Lozada, gave priority to the maritime claim and one of the questions of the gas referendum that took place nine months after October was: “Do you agree with Carlos Mesa’s policy of using the gas as a strategic resource to negotiate a useful and sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean?” (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2008, p. 249). On 23 March 2004, the Day of the Sea that marked the 125 years of the fall of Calama (and the death of Eduardo Abaroa), the government led five minutes of national silence, as occurred in 1979, in which traffic and public activities were stopped, and television and radio channels paused their programmes (Bolivia.com, 2004). Mesa’s administration also published the first version of the Blue Book, which laid out the main historical arguments to support the Bolivian claim (Presidency of the Republic Bolivia, 2004).

With the election of Evo Morales in 2005, an attempt to restore relations between the two countries started again. In 2006, a 13-point agenda was signed with Chilean president Michelle Bachelet. The agenda did not advance and in 2011, in his second term, Evo Morales decided to present a formal request in the International Court of Justice in The Hague. In April that year, Morales called an advisory council that gathered together five ex-presidents with many different ideological leanings.²³⁴ According to Perrier Bruslé, this initiative was a consequence of a political crisis lived by Morales in his second term. “The sacred union of social organizations that has ensured Evo Morales’s electoral success is cracking on all fronts” and, as

²³³ See *United States and the Bolivian Seacoast* (Gumucio Granier, 1988), *El enclaustramiento marítimo de Bolivia en los foros del mundo* (Gumucio Granier, 1993), 1884. *Pacto de Tregua* (Aguirre Lavayén, 1987), and *Oportunidades Perdidas* (Montenegro, 1987).

²³⁴ The following ex-presidents attended: Jaime Paz Zamora (1989-1993), Guido Vildoso Calderón (1982), Jorge Quiroga Ramírez (2001-2002), Carlos Mesa (2003-2005) y Eduardo Rodríguez (2005). See *Los Tiempos* (2011).

a consequence, states Perrier Bruslé, “Morales has stressed the need to give common interest priority over sectarian interests. To strengthen his weakened political base, he has promoted the common goal shared by all Bolivians: the restoration of the coastline” (2013, p. 48).

As a consequence of this policy, Bolivia started a new incisive foreign policy regarding the maritime demand; specialist bodies (a national council and a strategic office) were created, and two ex-presidents, Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé and Carlos Mesa, were brought in as key actors for the claim. The first was appointed as the agent in The Hague and the second as an official spokesman, whose function was to lobby for the maritime demand among other nations and at international forums. In 2014, Carlos Mesa presented to Morales the Book of the Sea (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2014), a revised and bilingual (Spanish-English) version of the Blue Book of 2004, to be distributed to embassies, international and national authorities and in Bolivian schools, as support for the maritime claim.²³⁵

After 136 years, the War of the Pacific regains the headlines of the main national newspapers and is shown to be one of the liveliest collective memories in Bolivian history. In this brief historical account, we can identify three main moments in which the maritime issue became very popular and affected Bolivian state policies and political changes: in the 1920s and 1930s, with the arrival of the republicans into power and the militaristic ideology that led Bolivia to the Chaco War; in the 1960s and 1970s, with the River Lauca dispute, the Charaña embrace and the centenary commemorations, which helped to undermine Bánzer’s popularity; and finally from 2000 on, with the Gas War that overthrew Sánchez de Lozada and with Morales’ launching of a diplomatic offensive regarding the maritime claim. In general, in these periods, administrations that demonstrated a more pragmatic view and friendly approach to Chile were viewed by the public with suspicion, while administrations that adopted a more incisive position gained more popularity. However, this does not explain the restoring of relations between the two countries during two of the most left-wing and popular governments in the history of Bolivia: the first term of Paz Estenssoro (1952-56) after the National Revolution and the first term of Evo Morales (2006-2010). A possible explanation is that during these periods the government was too involved in resolving domestic tensions, battling internal adversaries and creating new institutional bases for a renovated Bolivian state.

Since the aftermath of the conflict, the negotiations regarding the maritime claim were matched by intense scholarly production, normally focusing on the diplomatic relations between Chile and Bolivia. From the mid-twentieth century on, more cultural and commemorative activities on the war appeared. In 1952, the state formalised the memory of Eduardo Abaroa

²³⁵ See entry “El Libro Azul” in the politician’s official website (Mesa Gisbert, 2014).

with the enactment of 23 March as a national commemoration day. Later, with the centenary, literary works such as the poems of Oscar Cerruto or the novel *Felipe Delgado* helped to make sense of the war within the subjective and contradictory experience of national identity and other fictional works, such as the book *Guano Maldito* and the movie *Amargo Mar*, contributed to popularising the history and political conflicts related to the war.

Limited war, limitless memory

The memory of the War of the Pacific has accompanied Bolivian political life closely over this past century. The state has promoted this memory in many ways and it has effectively permeated the lives of Bolivian citizens, through ceremonies, monuments, maps and schooling. Nevertheless, the state was not able to control its many political messages, which have inspired social actors since 1879. If one could reasonably argue, with Perrier Bruslé (2013), that the use of the maritime claim creates social unification, a “common goal” that counteracts sectarian interests and stabilises a government in a political crisis, the opposite is also true. If we analyse the history of this memory, the appeal to the seacoast loss has contributed more to governments’ falls than to their stabilisation.

In recent history, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada fell because, among other things, he ignored the strength of this memory; but Carlos Mesa, who had greater historical sensibility, also could not sustain his government simply by appealing to it. Through such a lens, Evo Morales’ more assertive policy regarding the maritime claim is actually risky, and can only be understood if one considers the substantial popularity and consensus that his government enjoys. What is the difference between the oil pipeline of Paz Estenssoro, approved in 1955 without popular outcry, and the gas pipeline of Sánchez de Lozada? The answer to this question certainly involves a consideration of the extent to which their governments were supported by popular sectors.

The political effects of remembering the lost seacoast are unforeseeable and this is due to the ways people relate to this memory in their daily lives. Different from Connerton’s depiction of collective memories, which associates these institutional memories with the reproduction of the *status quo*, the massive reproduction of it through schooling, maps and all sorts of civic experiences creates a powerful and affective frame that instigates, rather than undermines, political action. We enter here into the field of the reception of official memories and the War of the Pacific is an example of how problematic it is to assume that the means of memory – rites, monuments, school texts, lyrics of an anthem, books – are able to convey the unequivocal messages intended by their creators (Kansteiner, 2002).

Another surprising feature of the memory of the War of the Pacific is that the strength of the national attachment it expresses is actually disproportionate to the war itself. As described earlier, Bolivians never had more than six thousand men at the front and the total casualties were no more than 19,000, most of them from the Peruvian side. According to Miguel Ángel Centeno, limited wars in Latin America “were often unpopular and among recruits generated more resentment than patriotic fervour” (2002, p. 255). Centeno’s theory is that a tradition of limited wars in the continent, rather than total wars, created fiscal deregulation and debt and helped to weaken the state instead of fostering a sense of national collectivity (2002, pp. 266–269). Even though he recognises that this war specifically plays a “large role” in Bolivian nationalism (2002, p. 58), his model fails to explain how such a limited event created a long-lasting and important collective memory which fosters national attachment, and how such a strong national attachment did not actually help to create a stronger state. As Matthias Vom Hau noted, Centeno’s measurement sits “uncomfortably between collective attachments and official ideology as two plausible, yet analytically distinct conceptualizations of nationalism” (Vom Hau, 2013, p. 150).

Given the intense and affective nationalism, which fosters political action, conveyed by the memory of the seacoast, it is not surprising that the most recent arena in which it flourished in its radical form was El Alto. As argued in Chapter Four, El Alto is a liminal space not only between the city and the countryside, but also between society and the state. This mediating position provides the local activists with enhanced opportunities for political action and allowed them, during October 2003, to place themselves as the spokesmen of the nation.

PART III – POTOSÍ

When the 19 days of civic strike occurred in Potosí in 2010, the political situation in Bolivia was very different from 2003. Evo Morales was already the president of Bolivia and he had survived the first years of his administration, which included a controversial “nationalisation” of hydrocarbons, a troubled but creative constituent assembly that changed the name of the country from the Republic of Bolivia to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and a violent reaction from right-wing opposition groups in September 2008, who ambushed pro-government peasants and killed at least eleven people in Pando.²³⁶

In 2010, however, the government had overcome the “catastrophic tie” (*empate catastrófico*), as formulated by the Vice-President Álvaro García Linera (2008), with these right wing forces, concentrated in the eastern and lowland departments of Bolivia. In January 2009 and after considerable revision in Congress with the opposition, the new constitution was approved in a popular referendum and in December that year, Evo Morales was re-elected with 64% of the vote. In his second administration, the clashes between government and opposition became less dramatic and the main conflicts involved former sectors of the government’s support base.

By the end of 2010, Morales’ government announced the end of the subsidies on fuels, causing considerable price rises (82% in diesel, 57% gasoline), in a measure that was called *gasolinazo*.²³⁷ Popular sectors immediately reacted against it and the government had to step back. During 2010 and 2011, indigenous groups from the lowlands mobilised through a number of marches to claim from the government the indigenous autonomy present in the new constitution.²³⁸ Especially relevant were the groups from the Isiboro Sécure National Park and

²³⁶ The “Heroes of Chaco” Decree (28701), enacted in May 2006, is considered the main landmark of Morales’ policy on hydrocarbons. Actually, the “nationalising measures” of the decree - 82% of profits to the state and 12% to the multinational companies – were only valid for the period of transition (180 days), in which the contracts with the companies were to be renegotiated. Even though the government managed to increase its revenue substantially with the new contracts, Morales’ policy on hydrocarbons did not represent a reconstruction of YPFB’s production capabilities and the industrialisation of the resource, as envisaged by activists in October 2003. For a detailed analysis of the nationalisation, see Webber (2011a, pp. 80–83). The constituent assembly and the new constitution that emerged from it also occupied the country’s political life in the first years of Morales government. Some accounts pointed out that the “troubled” character of the process affected its ability to create consensus in Bolivian society (Gamboa Rocabado, 2009); others emphasised the creativity of a constitutional assembly that for the first time included indigenous, peasant and other popular sectors; and that expressed the existing conflicts and projects of Bolivian society at the time (Iamamoto, 2013; Schavelzon, 2012). For more details on the bloodshed in Pando, see Bret Gustafson (2009).

²³⁷ See BBC Mundo (2011).

²³⁸ For more information on the demand of indigenous autonomy and its relationship with the Bolivian state before and since Evo Morales, see Rafaela Pannain (2014).

Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS), who protested against official plans to build a highway passing through their territory, claiming their right to prior and informed consultation.²³⁹

The 19 days of mobilisation in Potosí provided a third example of the popular fracture that the second administration of Evo Morales experienced in its first years. In 2009, Morales' party, MAS, had received the support of 78% of the voters from the department of Potosí, while the second political party, the *Alianza Social* (AS), a traditional left-wing group, gathered 13% of the vote.²⁴⁰ However, in July 2010 the Civic Committee of Potosí (COMCIPO), supported by many local organisations, declared a civic strike to focus the central government's attention on the departmental list of demands. The mobilisation escalated over 19 days and, at its height, gathered more than 2,000 people on hunger strike.

Founded in the sixteenth century by the Spanish in order to exploit the rich reserves of silver of the Cerro Rico (the Rich Mountain), the Imperial City of Potosí had an intense history during the colonial period. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, Potosí was one of the poorest areas of Bolivia. Chapter Six covers the struggle in 2010 and explores the local *potosino* identity by analysing the city's history of economic cycles and regional mobilisations, combined with a strong miner identity, constructed in opposition to the indigenous peasant. It also assesses the slogan of "federal Potosí" that appeared during the mobilisation and the local activists' relationship with the Bolivian state and nation.

Chapter Seven focuses on the memory of the colonial city and how it appeared during the nineteen days of civic strike. *Potosinos* were inspired by old tales of wealth, decay and suffering to make sense of their contemporary mobilisation, making the city's colonial experience a central reference of the past, around which their political projects and expectations could be built. The chapter reconstructs how these tales travelled from colonial times to the miners' bookshelves and investigates how the colonial legacy increasingly pervaded the daily lives of Potosí's inhabitants.

²³⁹ On the Tipnis dispute and its relationship with development projects and indigenous perceptions of resource extractivism, see Renata de A. Moraes (2014) and John-Andrew McNeish (2013).

²⁴⁰ The numbers make reference to the votes for president, vice-president and plurinominal (*plurinominales*) deputies. AS received 20% of the votes for uninominal (*uninominales*) deputies, while MAS received 69%. Of the 18 members of Congress elected by Potosí, only one was from the AS and all the others were from MAS (Sifde, 2013, p. 6). During the Constitutional Assembly, AS was among the most traditional Marxist left-wing parties, at least according to the content of its document on the "view of country" (Iamamoto, 2013, pp. 82–83).

CHAPTER SIX – 19 DAYS AND 500 YEARS²⁴¹

On 26 July 2010, hundreds of representatives of the eleven *ayllus* of Coroma arrived in the city of Potosí. They complained about the delay of the Bolivian authorities in solving their border problems with the municipalities in the department of Oruro, a process that had dragged on since 2000 (UNIR, 2012). Coroma was then an indigenous sub-district of the Uyuni municipality, occupying a territory of around 4,000 km² in the northeast corner of the Uyuni Salt Lake, home to around 6,000 people (Vice-Ministerio de Tierras, 2010, pp. 487–488). This territory between Oruro and Potosí departments had become more valuable in recent years, since it was traditionally used for quinoa crops and the price of the staple had increased substantially in international markets, and limestone reserves had been discovered in the Pahuja Mountain, one of the areas in dispute. Indigenous peasants of Coroma arrived in their hundreds - a local newspaper even mentioned 800 *coromeños* - in the central square of the city of Potosí to make two main demands: the final delimitation of their borders with Oruro and the construction of a cement plant in their territory, so they could benefit from the exploration of limestone (El Potosí, 2010b, 2010c).

Meanwhile, the Civic Committee of Potosí (COMCIPO) was already organising demonstrations to call the government's attention to a regional petition. Celestino Condori, president of COMCIPO in 2010, considers that the presence of *coromeños* was key in order to ignite a more intense mobilisation: "The first civic strike was done as usual, many people didn't comply with it. In the beginning and during the first days of strike, the people from Coroma came and made them comply with their whips. It was interesting to see the peasants enforcing the strike here in the city."²⁴² After the *coromeños* arrived, six main topics were prioritised: the construction of an international airport, the preservation of the Cerro Rico of Potosí, the construction of highways, the reactivation of Karachipampa (a metal processing plant), the cement plant in Coroma and the resolution of its border problems.

²⁴¹ This title was inspired by Franz Flores' paper on the mobilisation, '19 días y 500 noches en la política potosina' (2011), which in turn was inspired by the well-known song of the Spanish musician Joaquín Sabina, '19 días y 500 noches'.

²⁴² Interview on 10 September 2013.



Map 4 – Potosí department with railway lines

COMCIPO is the civic organisation of the department of Potosí; its main members are the Central Obrera Departamental (COD-Potosí), the transport workers' associations, the Federación Universitaria Local (FUL-Potosí), rural and urban teachers' organisations, the local Federación de Juntas Vecinales (FEJUVE-Potosí), the Federación Departamental de Cooperativas Mineras (FEDECOMIN-Potosí), the Federación de Trabajadores de la Prensa (FTP), markets and street traders organisations, and the peasant departmental organisation (Federación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos Originarios Quechuas de Potosí, FSUTCOQP). Compared to civic committees in other departments of Bolivia, such as the civic committee of Santa Cruz, COMCIPO leans much more towards popular rather than business interests. "It's a popular civic-committee, with progressive sensitivities, because all the struggles that have been done were,

for instance, to recover natural resources, that profits should be socialised, all these things. So, it's always been a progressive civic committee", defines Celestino Condori.²⁴³

COMCIPO's petition of six topics in 2010 was an amalgamation of the most pressing topics in the department's current political life and came from a consensus among most of the organisations that compose the committee's advisory council. They had also appeared in many other moments of civic mobilisation during the twentieth century, as will be seen below. The ones related to Coroma were a reaction to their struggle and to the physical presence of hundreds of *coromeños* in the city of Potosí. While the demand to conclude the construction works on many sections of the highways connecting different parts of the department clearly responded to the needs of both the capital and the provinces, some of the other topics related more specifically to the capital. In particular, the petition asked for the construction of an international airport in Potosí, to increase tourism and the preservation of the Cerro Rico. The mountain, whose minerals have been mined for more than four hundred years, was described by many as a "Swiss cheese" that ran the risk of collapse at any moment. New damages in its structure were found a couple of weeks before the mobilisation.

Besides the preservation of Cerro Rico, there was another topic that instigated popular emotions: the reactivation of Karachipampa plant. The plant has a long history of frustrations, since it was launched by Siles Zuazo in 1984 for the smelting of lead-silver and was closed a couple of years later with the decrease of mineral prices and the neoliberal re-structuring reforms undertaken by Paz Estenssoro. After more than twenty years, Evo Morales decided to re-open Karachipampa. Gregorio Flores, who was on the mobilisation committee in 2010 and had worked on the construction of the plant in the late 1970s and early 1980s, explains that Morales' decision was linked to the opening of the huge mine at San Cristóbal in 2000, since Karachipampa lacked enough raw material: "Only San Cristóbal can make Karachipampa work, so only now it's the official policy that the plant should reopen (...). So now we have to take this opportunity and smelt".²⁴⁴ However, the reopening of the plant took more time than the *potosinos* expected because the subsidiary company, Atlas Precious Metal, had not invested the

²⁴³ Interview on 10 September 2013. René Navarro, a former leadership of COMCIPO defines the organisation along similar lines: "As a civic committee, we have always been linked to the Departmental Workers Central. COMCIPO does not represent the elites as in Santa Cruz. In Santa Cruz, the civic committee represents the *logías* [Masonic lodges], but here we represent different organisations. The thought of the civic committee in Potosí is very different from the civic committee in Santa Cruz. Very different." Interview on 30 November 2012.

²⁴⁴ Interview on 12 September 2013. San Cristóbal mine and its role in the regional economy will be discussed in the next section.

amount projected in the contract with COMIBOL.²⁴⁵ In July 2010, the government enforced Atlas's guarantee and the company dismissed 87 workers who were also a leading force during the mobilisation and were demanding the plant's reactivation, either under Atlas or under the direct management of COMIBOL (Kosich, 2008; La Razón, 2010; Los Tiempos, 2006).

The petition raised by COMCIPO was seen as a reasonable demand to the national government. Jhonny Lally, an activist from the transport sector who became the president of COMCIPO in 2013, demonstrates this perception: "we were sure that our demands would be respected, (...) everything that was being asked was there because of a fair reason and should be met. We weren't asking for something impossible."²⁴⁶ Most social sectors expected a quick and satisfactory answer from the president. However, the refusal of Morales to come personally to Potosí to negotiate the petition, one of COMCIPO's initial conditions, and the government's constant public statements labelling the movement as partisan, destroyed the possibility of a rapid solution to the conflict. Jorge Solares, a member of the COD, deplores the government's position: "There was nothing to fear in terms of being present [in the city of Potosí]. During the first four, five days of civic strike, they could have come to Potosí and negotiated with the people".²⁴⁷ Benigno Castillo, an activist of the FTP, narrates a process of growing dissatisfaction with Morales among the city's population:

People have entrusted us with the mobilisations and, when we saw there was no answer from the government, when we saw that the government was too inflexible, we had to start the pressure measures. First, we had 24 hours of civic strike, but there was no dialogue, nothing. Then, 48 hours, 72 hours, little by little, which is more or less the norm with pressure measures like these. So, in the end, an advisory council [*consejo consultivo*] approved an open-ended general civic strike. This civic strike was declared, but we didn't have any rapprochement with the government, which started to disqualify the civic movement of Potosí. Of the six demands, it didn't meet any of them.²⁴⁸

Faced with the government's inflexible position, the mobilisation escalated and was extended for 19 days. After the *coromeños* arrived on 26 July and started their blockage of one of the city's entrances, COMCIPO carried out a civic strike on 29 July for 48 hours. When it expired, COMCIPO announced that the main organisations of the city would take part in an open-ended and mobilised civic strike. This strike only finished with the negotiations held in Sucre, on 16 August 2010.

²⁴⁵ COMIBOL (Corporación Minera de Bolivia) is the state mining corporation, which was created in 1952 after the nationalisation of the mines. The corporation is responsible for signing and monitoring the mining contracts with private companies.

²⁴⁶ Interview on 9 September 2013.

²⁴⁷ Interview on 11 September 2013.

²⁴⁸ Benigno Castillo, interview on 11 September 2013.

Many leaders emphasised the improvised character of the mobilisation. Celestino Condori remembers that, even in neighbourhoods where no notification or coordination came from the mobilisation committee, people started to join the strike:

People would go to the streets, take out their chairs, and raise their flags of their own initiative. People themselves promoted the compliance with the strike. So, everything was paralysed. (...) Maybe they were motivated by the local media, maybe they were angry because the government would not listen to us after so much time. Potosí has given so many things to the country (...). We were surprised by the brave reaction of *potosino* people.²⁴⁹

The tactics of the mobilisation combined these street blockades in the neighbourhoods and in the main streets of the city; blockades at the entrances to the city, each being the responsibility of particular social movements, such as the *garita* (entry point) San Antonio that was occupied by *coromeños*; marches on key dates of the mobilisation and hunger strikes. The main marches occurred on 3 and 6 August, with 100,000 and 150,000 people respectively, according to the local newspaper (El Potosí, 2010f, 2010i).²⁵⁰ The traditional celebrations of 6 August, the national day of independence, were replaced by a protest march on a “day of departmental mourning” (El Potosí, 2010h).²⁵¹ The colours of the department, white and red, and the slogan “federal Potosí”, into which the frustrated feelings of the population were condensed, were seen and heard all over.

The most surprising mobilisation tactic, however, was the hunger strike. It started as a measure carried out by some leaders, similar to what occurred with the hunger strike at Radio San Gabriel in El Alto in 2003, promoted by the peasant leadership, but it gradually became massive. In seven days, between 6 August and 13 August 2010, the number of people on hunger strike jumped from 45 to 2,000. Before the negotiations in Sucre in the middle of August, there were more than 200 hunger strike pickets, organised by working category or by neighbourhood. Many of the pickets were tents installed on the streets to support the blockades. Among the hunger strikers, there were *vecinos*, teachers, retired people, market sellers and other less conventional social sectors, such as sex workers and prisoners (El Potosí, 2010h, 2010i, 2010k, 2010l, 2010n). The next chapter will discuss further the hunger strike tactic in relation to the memory of Potosí’s colonial past and its symbolic religious content.

²⁴⁹ Interview on 10 September 2013.

²⁵⁰ Considering that Potosí has, according to the latest census in 2012, around 190,000 inhabitants, the numbers of demonstrators in the marches look too optimistic. In any case, the marches were massive and included a considerable part of the population.

²⁵¹ Jhonny Llally describes the day “(on 6 August) we took to the streets again, more than 160,000, 150,000 people marched again on the street, putting our patriotic symbol - our red, yellow and green flag - in mourning. We met in this departmental mourning because we were not attended when we simply asked for the progress of the department of Potosí”. Interview on 9 September 2013.

Local media (television, radios and newspapers) was key to creating a popular imaginary of regional courage and sacrifice, with a commitment that had not been seen during October 2003 in La Paz, for example. Radio Kollasuyo collected food, mattresses and clothing for the hundreds of *coromeños* who were blocking the entry point of San Antonio (El Potosí, 2010e). Every step of the mobilisation was covered through special sections, programmes and a daily agenda of activities. Rodolfo Velasco, a teachers' leader, says that it was through the local media that parents were informed that the teachers would join the mobilisation: "The parents knew [about the mobilisation] through the media, because we sent press releases to TV channels, newspapers. We were also interviewed by journalists. So, the parents already knew."²⁵²

Despite the massive marches and the hunger strike, the dialogue with the government only advanced after one measure: the occupation of the power plant that provides energy to the mining company San Cristóbal by the Jatun Ayllu Yura, who acted in coordination with the civic movement in Potosí, on 10 August (El Potosí, 2010m).²⁵³ As a consequence, the mine, owned by the Japanese mining corporation Sumitomo, stopped its operations the following day. The daily loss in exports of San Cristóbal alone was two million US dollars, according to the Minister of Mining, José Pimentel (Shahriari, 2010). This action basically stopped all mining activities in the department of the Potosí, since the workers of Sichi Wayra and San Bartolomé, private projects around the city of Potosí, and the cooperative miners were also on strike.

Given that Potosí is the most important mining department in Bolivia, accounting for 85% of national mining exports in 2010 (Ferrufino Goitia, Eróstegui Torres, & Gavinchá Lima, 2011, p. 52), the government felt the pressure to negotiate. Besides, after more than two weeks of blockade and hunger strikes, the population also demonstrated signs of being tired. COMCIPO's general assembly finally authorised the organisations' representatives to negotiate the six demands with the government in Sucre, a neutral locality. From 12 August until 16 August, a local commission discussed and bargained the six points with ministers, managing to agree some partial compromises. "The commission brought nothing concrete, only the known governmental promises of undertaking studies and establishing commissions in order to have agreements", states Franz Flores Castro (2011, p. 106).²⁵⁴ Right after the negotiation took place,

²⁵² Interview on 27 September 2013.

²⁵³ The Jatun Ayllu Yura is located in the municipality of Tomave, south west of the city of Potosí, and is one of the most active groups in the Consejo de Ayllus Originarios de Potosí (CAOP) and in CONAMAQ. Roger Rasnake (1988) has studied its structure of authority.

²⁵⁴ Most of the activists interviewed in 2013, three years after the 19 days, expressed frustration regarding this negotiation and the compliance with the six points. They said that the cement plant in Coroma was not a reality and the conflicts over the boundaries were still happening. Karachipampa was on hold for technical reasons, the international airport was only a project, and the preservation of Cerro Rico was also

leaders did not know how the popular masses would react to what they considered very partial compromises from the government. Guillermo Condori, a leader of the cooperative miners, remembers he was expecting to meet a furious mass of disappointed people back in Potosí:

When we came back from Sucre (...), we thought that, since we achieved nothing, people would kill us, hang us, I don't know. But we had the courage to come back and finally people received us here as heroes (...). As I told you, this was a dream for us, (...) even if we achieve nothing, we achieved unity. This was the pride of the *potosinos*.²⁵⁵

If the leaders were received as heroes at the end of the mobilisation, it was not because of any singular characteristic held by them, but because they were identified with the rank-and-file, seen as sharing the fate of all *potosinos*. As the people on hunger strike and at the blockades, they were victims of the government's arrogance and mistreatment. On 17 August, one day after the leaders came back from Sucre, *El Potosí* published a cartoon in which one can see a minister shouting at a COMCIPO's representative, with a dog and a baseball bat at his back, both identified as "pro-government movements". The COMCIPO militant appears beaten and scared, as if he was being forced to negotiate. It is an image of impotence and political isolation.

Even though there are many characteristics common to popular mobilisations – spontaneity, a sense of injustice and rooted local organisations – these 19 days in Potosí were different from the struggles that occurred in 2003 previously analysed here. The self-image of the *potosino* carried a particular bonding with the city that was central to the emergence of the political slogan "federal Potosí". The next sections will cover the economic and historical contexts of the city, in order to better access its local identity and political project, which will be analysed in the final sections of this chapter. Even though peasant actors, such as *coromeños*, were central to the unfolding of the mobilisation, this and the following chapter will focus on the actors from the city. As in Omasuyos, where activists project the idea of Qullasuyo to the whole of Bolivia, people from the city of Potosí manage a broader space - the department - as the stage of their political demands, but hold a smaller and more intimate space - the city - as the stage of their memories and more affective references for their struggle.²⁵⁶

still at the stage of preliminary studies. Only the demand regarding the roads had been almost totally met by the government.

²⁵⁵ Interview on 7 November 2013.

²⁵⁶ For more accounts of the 19 days of mobilisation in Potosí, see Vladimir Cruz Llanos (2010), Franz Flores (2011) and Luis Alemán Vargas (2013).

The short mining “bonanza”

When measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), Bolivia is the second poorest country in South America, with a score of 0.667, above only Guyana.²⁵⁷ And, of the nine departments in Bolivia, Potosí is the one with the lowest HDI, scoring only 0.575 in 2007 (PNUD, 2010, pp. 90–92). In 2001, 47% of the department’s population lived in extreme poverty and another 33% lived in moderate poverty, with almost 95% with unsatisfied basic needs; this situation changed in 2012: only 19% were considered extremely poor, 40% were moderately poor, and, in total, 83% had unsatisfied basic needs.²⁵⁸ One could say that the situation was less desperate but far from satisfactory. Poverty and overall lack of development were common causes of the mobilisation identified by the social actors of the 2010 strike. Celestino Condori expresses this perception:

What’s happening in Potosí is really painful, so many people in misery in the countryside and in the urban peripheries. The president, who is indigenous, should give people in the countryside minimal conditions of subsistence, education, health, housing, employment, etc. But that doesn’t happen, and this is why a massive number of peasant people from North Potosí go to La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba to beg at the end of every year and this is outrageous. (...) This is something painful, because people see us, the *potosinos*, as miserable. This must stop.²⁵⁹

One might expect, therefore, that the mobilisation occurred as a result of a crisis, as happened in El Alto in 2003, in which already very poor people were living under even more severe conditions because of a particular economic situation. A deeper look into the recent developments of the country’s economy, however, shows us that the mobilisation happened in a moment of economic “bonanza” for the department. During the years immediately before, the department’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew impressively: 13% in 2007, 24% in 2008 and 8% in 2009. These numbers are mainly due to mining activity: the huge mine of San Cristóbal came to be fully operative and the prices of minerals increased considerably during this period (Ferrufino Goitia, Eróstegui Torres, & Gavincha Lima, 2011, p. 46). San Cristóbal, owned by the Sumitomo Corporation, is an open-pit mine in the municipality of Colcha K that produces around 1,300 metric tons of zinc-silver concentrates and 300 metric tons of lead-silver concentrates a day.²⁶⁰ The impact of San Cristóbal on the country’s mining activities is huge: data from 2008 shows that it represents 72% of Potosí’s production in metric tons, while the department alone

²⁵⁷ The data refers to 2013, available at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) webpage <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>>.

²⁵⁸ Comparative data from Unidad de Análisis de Políticas Sociales y Económicas (UDAPE) of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE), accessed through INE’s webpage <www.ine.gob.bo>.

²⁵⁹ Interview on 10 September 2013.

²⁶⁰ This information is available at the mine’s webpage <<http://www.minerasancristobal.com/en/what-we-do/production>>.

is responsible for 66% of the gross value of national mining production (Ferrufino Goitia, Eróstequi Torres, & Gavinchá Lima, 2011, p. 51-54).

This growth of the mining industry can be also seen in Bolivian exports between 2006 and 2012. In Table 3 below, we can see that the presence of minerals as a proportion of national exports increased considerably from 2006 on, peaked between 2009 and 2011, exactly when the regional mobilisation in Potosí happened, and went back to the initial representation in 2012. Therefore, during this period, the mining industry was the second largest proportion of exports in Bolivia, but this situation quickly reverted in 2012.²⁶¹

Table 3 - Exports according to economic activity, in millions of US dollars – 2006 to 2012

Year	Hydrocarbons		Minerals		Manufactures		Agriculture		Total	
2006	2011	49%	794	19%	1124	27%	159	4%	4088	100%
2007	2240	46%	1062	22%	1331	28%	189	4%	4822	100%
2008	3483	50%	1521	22%	1654	24%	275	4%	6933	100%
2009	2107	39%	1498	28%	1505	28%	290	5%	5400	100%
2010	2984	43%	1861	27%	1840	26%	281	4%	6966	100%
2011	4112	45%	2427	27%	2262	25%	345	4%	9146	100%
2012	5871	50%	2074	18%	3324	28%	525	4%	11794	100%

Source: Ministry of Economy and Public Finances of Bolivia (2013).

Although San Cristóbal was a main factor for the ‘bonanza’, the *Cerro Rico* still played an important role in this new context. According to Ferrufino Goitia *et al*, the mountain exported US\$ 538 million in 2010, which corresponds to around a third of departmental exports in this category (2011, p. 59). The authors also calculate that around 18,000 miners work in the Cerro Rico and about 80% of them are second-class workers: they are paid by the day or according to their service and are not associate members of any cooperative. In terms of mining participation in the city’s economy, 4 in 10 workers in Potosí are directly dependent on mining (2011, p. 158). There was impressive growth in the numbers of people employed in the cooperative sector over the last few years, since a previous study informs us, using data from the cooperatives themselves, that only 5,755 miners worked in the Cerro Rico (Tapia Montecinos, 2005, p. 81).

²⁶¹ Because of the current decreases in the prices of minerals, it is unlikely that the mining industry will recover its relative good position of 2009 in the short term.

Political actors in Potosí were aware of a particularly favourable situation and probably perceived it as an opportunity to gain a better regional position on the national stage. This combined with the fact that the government was left-wing and was initially perceived to be more sensitive to local demands. “We don’t want to be the fifth wheel of a vehicle, we want to be an important wheel, but the government apparently doesn’t understand it. While we keep giving all our resources, being the dairy cow, the purse of Bolivia, we keep being left behind [*postergados*]”, argues Emilio Elias, representative of the teachers’ movement in COMCIPO during 2010.²⁶²

On the other hand, if one considers the actual social indicators of Potosí department, the “bonanza” did not significantly improve people’s life conditions. As seen before, poverty rates were less dramatic in 2012, but 83% of the population still had unsatisfied basic needs. In that year, Potosí was still the worst department in terms of years of study: the average *potosino* studied for 7.13 years, almost 1.5 years less than the national average of 8.97 years. The infant mortality rate increased from 72 to 91 between 2003 and 2008, indicating a general failure of the Bolivian state to improve basic health care in the region (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2003, 2008).²⁶³ This can be partially explained by the pattern of public investment in 2009, for example. While in that year, the investment in social areas (health, education, housing and basic sanitation) represented 23.5% of the total national executed public investment, in Potosí it represented only 8.1% of the total departmental public investment (Ferrufino Goitia et al., 2011, p. 60).

Thus, 2010 was not only a question of demanding national recognition, there was also a feeling of frustration with a model of exploitation of natural resources that brought very little in return to the majority of people. However, perhaps more surprising than the low impact of the mining activities in guaranteeing social rights in Potosí was the absence of a demand that tackled this issue directly during the 19 days of strike. The six demands focused mainly on industrialisation and confronted the issue of poverty through a traditional form of development, with the construction of roads and factories. The reasoning behind it seems to be that health, education and better living conditions are implied in these public constructions (*obras*), since the six demands would guarantee more jobs and economic development. This perception of development, also seen in El Alto and to a lesser extent in Omasuyos, took on dimensions specific to Potosí because it was combined with a petition for more political autonomy, for a federal department. And one of the antecedents of this federalism was the role the city of Potosí

²⁶² Interview on 25 September 2013.

²⁶³ The infant mortality rate is an estimate of the number of deaths in the first year of life for every 1,000 live births.

played during colonial and republican times, as well as its interaction with the Spanish Crown and the Bolivian state.

Economic cycles and regional mobilisation

This section has two main purposes: to delineate the main economic cycles that the city of Potosí has experienced since its foundation and to point out how the social sectors in the city began to mobilise according to regional identity in the twentieth century. This regionalism draws on the history of the city and the perception of an unfair peripheral political situation.

According to the most common version of the discovery of Potosí, it was Hualpa, a native from Cuzco, who accidentally discovered the rich reserves of silver of the Cerro Rico. The mountain was between the recently founded colonial city of La Plata (today Sucre) and Porco, a silver mine known by the Incas that was now being exploited by the Spanish. Soon the word spread and the new mine was formally registered in April 1545 (Mangan, 2005, pp. 21–23; Robins, 2011, p. 16). Some decades later, the ores with high concentrations of silver were exhausted. In 1569, King Phillip II appointed the Viceroy Francisco de Toledo to improve silver production and to re-structure colonial society, in order to guarantee the influx of silver to Spain and political and religious control of the region (Robins, 2011, p. 23).

Toledo established a new system of refining the metal through mercury amalgamation, which was complemented by a system of dams that provided water for the refinery mills, set along a canal called Ribera, preparing the ores for amalgamation (Robins, 2011, pp. 26–27).²⁶⁴ In order to increase and consolidate the workforce of the mine, Toledo established the system of the *mita*, which recruited forced labour from native communities. In theory, the *mita* recruited a seventh of the adult male population of every community every year to work in the mines. Even though the work was paid, the daily wages were extremely inferior to free market prices and were not enough cover the basic needs of *mitayos* and their families. There were also free workers in the mine, the *mingas*, but the most intense and dangerous activities were undertaken by *mitayos* (Padden, 1975, pp. xix–xx). To facilitate their recruitment and religious conversion, communities were also organised into *pueblo de reducciones*, colonial towns inhabited by Indians. The *reducciones* had an enduring impact on the political organisation of Indian groups and the highlands of many provincial towns, such as Achacachi and Coroma, date from these reforms.

²⁶⁴ Over the past centuries, around 45,000 metric tons of mercury were released in Potosí's environment, leaving a legacy of persistent soil contamination that extends until today (Robins, 2011).

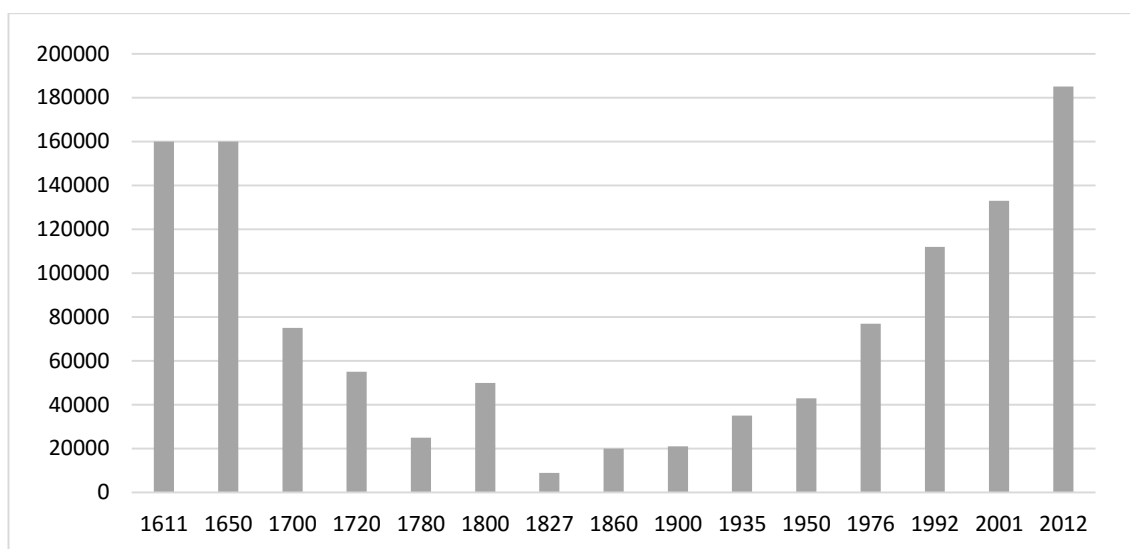
In 1572, the first Toledan *mita* mobilised 9,500 men with their respective families from 16 highland provinces (Mangan, 2005, p. 37). Once in Potosí, the families settled in *rancherías*, indigenous neighbourhoods mostly located south of the city centre, beyond the Ribera canal and between the city and the Cerro Rico. Each *ranchería* congregated *mitayos* from the same provinces and communities, who also had specific churches assigned to them (Querajazu, 2010, p. 60).

The Toledan reforms provided the conditions for a more intensive exploitation of silver and, in the following decades, Potosí reached its golden age. In the census of 1611, its population was around 160,000 people, making it the largest city in the Americas (Padden, 1975, p. xiii). The huge amount of silver extracted from the mountain during this period changed the world's economy by pouring tons of silver into the global market. Some even called the pieces of eight (*pesos de ocho*), the Spanish coins made in the New World mainly with Potosí's silver, the "first truly global money" (MacGregor, 2012, p. 439). The mining market of Potosí also changed the whole Andean area, as Carlos Sempat Assadourian underlines in his pioneering work. According to him, the intensive silver mining started a cycle of mercantile relationships, articulating the colonial economic space of the Viceroyalty of Peru. The market of Potosí mobilised resources and goods such as textiles, livestock and agricultural products from all Andean provinces and was the centre of the local colonial economy (Assadourian, 1982).

After 1650, however, the "golden age" of this economy based on the silver of Potosí began to decline. The city faced its first long term crisis, with production decreasing steadily until the first half of the eighteenth century. According to data compiled by Klein, the 1740s was the worst decade of silver production of the whole colonial period, with an average annual production of only 92,119 marks of silver, almost a tenth of the production of the 1590s (Table 4). By 1720, the population had decreased considerably and was around 55,000 (Graph 1). This was the period that the chronicler Bartolomé de Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela wrote his famous history of Potosí, full of accounts of grandeur and decadence, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Some decades later, the international market became more favourable and production, even though on a scale not comparable to the golden age, increased until the end of the eighteenth century (Tandeter, 1993). Despite this new cycle, the population continued to decrease until 1780, when Potosí had around 25,000 inhabitants, and only increased significantly around 1800, when it reached 50,000 (Graph 1). However, production dropped again around the turn of the century, when a combined crisis caused by the high prices of mercury with the Independence Wars affected both production and the population in Potosí. The silver business could not sustain itself without the *mita* and the Royal Bank's credit, institutions affected by the downfall of the colonial state (Tandeter, 1993, p. 222).

Graph 1 - Population of the city of Potosí between 1611 and 2012



Sources: Hanke, 1956; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2002, 2012; Mangan, 2005; Santamaría, 1973; Pentland, 1975.

Potosí participated in the independence struggles with a local rebellion on 10 November 1810, which remains Potosí's civic holiday. The rebels pledged allegiance to the patriot armies in Buenos Aires and, at the end of 1810, the city received its first "auxiliary army" coming from the south. When the royalists advanced from the north, the patriot army looted the Casa de la Moneda (the Royal Mint) in the middle of the night, escaping with 800,000 pesos (Arnade, 1957, pp. 65–66; Querajazu, 2010, pp. 80–83). Other groups sacked the city later, such as the army of the royalist general Pedro Olañeta in 1824 (Arnade, 1957, p. 129; Roca, 2007, pp. 600–602). According to the historian José Luis Roca, to sack silver before leaving Potosí became a tradition during the Independence Wars (2007, p. 601). The combination of these sackings with the crises of the *mita* and the colonial credit institutions was a catastrophe for the silver business in Potosí. The city was no more than a small town by the end of the war, with only 9,000 inhabitants in 1827 (Pentland, 1975, p. 58), and the production of silver had decreased to the lowest levels of the nineteenth century, almost comparable to the crisis in the 1740s (see Table 4).

The production of silver in Bolivia experienced a new boom in the last three decades of the nineteenth century, with the arrival of railways, lower prices of mercury and technological improvements in the mines lowering the prices of transport and production. According to Klein, annual production between 1870 and 1900 was even higher than during the golden colonial

period. The department of Potosí, with the mines of Pulacayo, Colquechaca and Portugalete among others, was still the centre of the new silver boom, but the importance of the Cerro Rico was secondary (Mitre, 1981, p. 21). Pulacayo, about 180 kilometres to the southwest of Potosí, in the region of the Uyuni Salt Lake, was the centre of the new silver boom and the main mining centre of the Huanchaca Company (see Map 4). The southwest of Potosí department and the seacoast provinces (lost to Chile during this period) were areas of huge influence for the Huanchaca Company, which was managed by the Bolivian Aniceto Arce, but also with considerable Chilean capital (Mitre, 1981, p. 92). Arce, who was president between 1888 and 1892, played an important role during the War of the Pacific, pressing the Bolivian government to solve the issue of the seacoast as quickly as possible by ceding the territory and seeking other benefits, such as the construction of railways, through a peace agreement with Chile. Even though he died two years earlier, the 1904 Treaty was the materialisation of his negotiations.

Table 4 - Silver production in Bolivia, 1780-1909 (in marks of silver)

	Average annual production	Maximum year output	Minimum year output
1590-99*	803,272	887,448	723,591
1740-49**	92,119	111,947	81,081
1780-89	387,170	416,676	335,848
1790-99	385,283	404,025	369,371
1800-09	297,472	371,416	194,347
1810-19	208,032	338,034	67,347
1820-29	156,110	177,727	132,433
1830-39	188,319	288,154	169,035
1840-49	191,923	256,064	142,029
1850-59	201,482	224,313	189,573
1860-69	344,435	391,304	312,174
1870-79	955,629	1,150,770	391,304
1880-89	1,111,568	1,660,804	597,686
1890-99	1,655,762	2,630,907	1,202,927
1900-09	799,791	1,288,452	385,522

*Maximum output decade in the colonial period

** Minimum output decade in the colonial period

Source: Klein (1986, p. 558).

The silver industry in Potosí failed to join the success of Huanchaca. In the 1850s, one of the most important Bolivian silver miners, José Avelino Aramayo, bought the Real Socavón in Potosí, but was unable to make the mine profitable. This situation was reflected in the low population increase of the city of Potosí during the second half of the nineteenth century (Graph 1).

Despite retaining some importance as the official minting centre of the new republic, Potosí's role in the national arena decreased considerably with the new trading routes

inaugurated by the railways.²⁶⁵ If Potosí was the centre of the regional economy during colonial times, this situation had gradually changed while silver production in the Imperial City decreased. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, Potosí was still an important city in the route to Salta (Argentina), which was, after Arica, the most important international commercial route. In 1889, a railway started to operate between Pulacayo and Antofagasta and was soon extended to Oruro. Besides lowering the costs of silver exportation, the new transport connections, sponsored by the Huanchaca Company, radically changed the commercial structure of the country:

The economic space traditionally articulated by the silver of Potosí (...) had now no possibilities of reconstitution. The reduction of transport costs by the railways allowed a varied spectrum of imported agricultural and industrial products to compete with advantage in a wider geographic area. The local production suffered then the effects of internal disarticulation (Mitre, 1981, pp. 175–176).

This change affected not only Potosí but also the agricultural centres of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz and the Indian population who used to be involved in the internal trade of products, as seen in Chapter Two. According to Mitre, this transformation marked the pattern of dependency of the Bolivian economy since then: “the practice of importing even the most simple and elementary industrial objects” (Mitre, 1981, p. 179).

At the end of the nineteenth century and with the adoption of the gold standard by many European countries, the price of silver sank (Mitre, 1981, pp. 34-36). In 1899, Bolivia experienced the Federal War, fought between conservatives and liberals, the former linked to the silver elites and the latter to the new flourishing tin elites. During the twentieth century, tin replaced silver as the main export product of Bolivia. The geographic centre of the new cycle changed from Pulacayo to Uncía and Llallagua in the north of Potosí department, which were the richest tin mines in Bolivia, both owned by Simón Patiño (Klein, 1986, p. 568). These centres were poorly connected to the city of Potosí and whenever conflicts between mine owners and workers arose, authorities were sent from Oruro, not Potosí, to intervene in the area.

The Cerro Rico, however, played a more significant role during the tin cycle. Louis Soux, a French engineer, acquired concessions in the mountain and exploited old slag heaps of colonial silver mining, which were very rich in tin. The “golden age” of Soux’s enterprise was between 1904 and 1911, when the slag heaps and the natural combustibles to refine them (firewood and yareta, a native plant) were still abundant. The Soux-Hernández enterprise, the company Soux founded with his brother-in-law, employed around 700 hundred people. After the 1929 crisis,

²⁶⁵ By 1893, however, the government started to order some of its currency from abroad and the Casa de la Moneda stopped its minting activities in 1953 (Leytón de la Quintana, 2003).

Mauricio Hochschild, one of the “tin barons” of the first half of the twentieth century, assumed control of mining activities on the mountain through the *Compañía Minera Unificada del Cerro Rico de Potosí*, also known as the *Unificada*, whose shares were divided among Hochschild, Soux and other companies (Waszkis, 2001, pp. 119–120).

By the middle of the twentieth century, Potosí was a small mining city, with around 40,000 inhabitants (Graph 1). After the Second World War, tin enjoyed good prices in the international market and the city was preparing for the celebrations of its 400th anniversary. In 1940, the Society of Geography and History of Potosí elaborated a five-year public works plan to celebrate the fourth centenary of the city. It covered transport issues, such as the construction of an airfield, and new railways and roads connecting the city to the rest of the department. There was also great preoccupation with improving the “urban image” of the city, so the plan included new public administrative buildings; a new train station, “equivalent or better than Oruro’s”; the restoration of the Casa de la Moneda and other historic buildings. It also demanded the establishment of a departmental tourist office and the renaming of the streets of Potosí “according to the old names of streets and squares”. The document concluded stating that Potosí’s department contributed huge amounts to the national coffers, but did not receive national investments in return (Caro Martínez, 2011, pp. 63–76).

It was also in the 1940s that the slogan “federal Potosí” first emerged. In 1942, the government of Peñaranda vetoed a law that established an inheritance tax on Simón Patiño’s wealth to be used for public works in the city of Potosí. After a popular assembly, in which ministers sent by Peñaranda tried to explain the veto, the mayor Walter Dalence led a march demanding a “Federal Potosí”. The government sent troops to besiege the city and stop the mobilisation (Acuña Martínez, 2010).²⁶⁶

In that same year, 1940, nostalgia for colonial times reappeared when Dalence inaugurated the flag of the city inspired by a banner held by Francisco Pizarro, with four white and red chequered squares, the colours of Castile and León. The banner was given to Potosí in 1578, but was taken to Bogotá after 1825 (Zavala Ayllón, 2012). This flag was the main symbolic object used during the mobilisation in 2010.

After the 1952 revolution, the Committee of Defence of the Interests of Potosí (CODEIPO), a predecessor of COMCIPO, organised a march with 25,000 people in 1956, putting a regional petition to the recently elected Hernán Siles Zuazo (El Potosí, 2011). One of CODEIPO’s

²⁶⁶ It was very difficult to find precise references on the mobilisation in 1940 without specific archival research. Acuña Martínez (2010) states that the initial problem was the veto of this law, whereas other sources indicate that an increase in mining taxes provoked the mobilisation (Alí Alí, 2010).

former member related the demands of 1956 to those of 2010, since both were expressions of the regional petitions and were poorly attended to by the national government (Aira, 2011).

Another key moment of regional mobilisations was in the 1970s, when civic institutions started to focus more on industrialisation than public works, as in the 1940s and 1950s. In 1976, under the Banzer dictatorship, 56,000 people marched for a zinc processing plant in Potosí, according to local newspapers, shouting the slogans “Federal Potosí” and “if you don’t meet our demands, my general, not even a single piece of mineral will leave [Potosí]” (Caro Martínez, 2011, pp. 161–163).²⁶⁷ The regional mobilisation, as also seen in 2010, did not attack the government directly and used an emotional appeal to reach the national government. Rodolfo Velasco, an urban teacher who participated in the hunger strike in 2010, remembers the mobilisation in the 1970s for the construction of the plant: “I was about 8, 10 years old (...). My parents had taken me to the marches in order to demand the installation of this plant in Karachipampa. It’s already forty years and the plant is not working!”²⁶⁸ Karachipampa started to be built by the end of the 1970s, but instead of zinc, it was designed to smelt lead-silver.

Also in 1976, COMCIPO was founded and presented its first petition to the national government. It prioritised the zinc plant but also mentioned old demands, such as the construction of the airport and the highways connecting Potosí to Uyuni and Villazón, important provincial towns. The old focus on public works and urbanisation was still present, since the petition also demanded the construction of a cultural centre and a stadium, but a major emphasis was placed on industrialisation and development projects. Besides the zinc plant, Comcipo required a cement plant, irrigation works and more general developments, such as “local use of natural resources” and the “road integration of the department” (Caro Martínez, 2011, pp. 235–238). There was an identifiable effort to represent the interests of the whole department instead of the city alone. On 1st April 1978, when the city celebrated its 433 anniversary, a departmental mourning was declared. A couple of years later, in 1982, COMCIPO organised a hunger strike with 150 people to call the government’s attention to its petition (Caro Martínez, 2011, pp. 240–246). Many of the demands and tactics that appeared in 2010 can be at least traced to this process of mobilisation in the 1970s and early 1980s.

As a mining region, the whole department of Potosí suffered from the neoliberal policies inaugurated in Bolivia by Decree 21060, signed by Paz Estenssoro in 1985. Most of Unificada’s workers, part of COMIBOL after the nationalisation of the mines in 1952, lost their jobs and even the cooperative miners’ activities were affected by the low price of tin. According to Guillermo

²⁶⁷ In Spanish: “Si no nos atiende mi general no saldrá ni un mineral”.

²⁶⁸ Interview on 27 September 2013.

Condori, around 3,000 workers were dismissed, and the city practically became a “mining camp” (*campamento minero*).²⁶⁹

While affected by the dismissal of miners, Potosí did not suffer the fate of other important mining centres, such as Llallagua and Uncía, which were heavily depopulated after 21060. As the capital of the department and an important regional centre, it also attracted rural migrants and former miners had the opportunity to re-adapt in the local economy, either working as cooperativists or in local commerce. Therefore, even if Potosí did not grow at the same speed as Santa Cruz or El Alto, cities that attracted the majority of migrants during the intense urbanisation of the last decades of the twentieth century, its population still rose from 77,000 to 133,000 between 1976 and 2001 and reached 185,000 in 2012, finally surpassing the colonial population (Graph 1).

COMCIPO's second intense mobilisation, after the struggle for Karachipampa in the 1970s, was in 1990, when the leaders of the committee began a hunger strike in La Paz against the contract Paz Zamora government was planning to sign with Lithium Corporation (LITHCO) to explore the reserves of the Uyuni Salt Lake. The contract was being negotiated directly with the company, without any licitation, and guaranteed the state only 0.5% of net sales (Radio Kollasuyo, 2012). A civic strike paralysed Potosí for many days and, together with the COMCIPO leaders' hunger strike in La Paz, forced the government to open an international licitation process (Zuleta Calderón, 2009).²⁷⁰ According to Celestino Condori, this was a key precedent for the struggle in 2010: “There was (...) a historical build-up of forces (*acumulación de fuerzas*). In the 1990s, there was (...) a similar movement, perhaps without the same magnitude of 2010. It was more specific though, to break-up a lithium contract that Jaime Paz Zamora had signed”.²⁷¹

The city's social movements actively participated in the mobilisations in 2003 and 2005, supporting the “October agenda”. On 19 September 2003, the day of national protest in defence of gas, COMCIPO organised a march demanding the construction of roads in the department, but also supporting the national petition against the export of gas (El Potosí, 2003a). After the army's violent actions in El Alto, COMCIPO started a civic strike on 14 October, demanding Sánchez de Lozada's resignation (El Potosí, 2003b). In 2005, Potosí again declared a general civil strike against the hydrocarbons law proposed by Mesa and later, when he resigned, cooperativists went to Sucre, where Congress was gathered, to demand new elections. They pressed for the resignation of right-wing constitutional successors (the head of the Senate,

²⁶⁹ Interview on 7 November 2013.

²⁷⁰ LITHCO was chosen again after the international licitation but after the Bolivian Congress imposed some changes to the contract, the company decided to withdraw from the deal. According to Zuleta, this was mainly due to the unfavourable lithium market at the time (2009).

²⁷¹ Interview on 10 September 2013.

Hormando Vaca Díez, and the head of the Chamber of Deputies, Mario Cossío), so the head of the Supreme Court, Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, who was committed to calling for early new elections, could become president. One cooperative leader was killed by the army when the protesters were arriving in Sucre, creating a local commotion (El Potosí, 2005a, 2005b). René Navarro, former president of COMCIPO, underlines the important role played by *potosinos* in this moment of Bolivian history:

The *potosinos*, especially the cooperative miners, moved to Sucre to guarantee that they don't cheat the Bolivian people, because Hormando Vaca Díez wanted to be president and rule from Santa Cruz. As *potosinos*, (...) we made sure that Rodríguez Veltzé became president, who at least was not directly committed to a party.²⁷²

Finally, Veltzé assumed the presidency and new elections took place in December, when Evo Morales won with more than 50% of the valid votes. As a result, social sectors in Potosí identify themselves with the “process of change”, a slogan that is defended today by both the government and its left-wing critics.

Since the Spanish found the rich ores of the Cerro Rico, the history of the city of Potosí has been marked by economic cycles of mining, intermingled with moments of crisis and depopulation. While these cycles followed each other, the relative importance of the city in the regional economy started to decrease. First, Potosí was the centre of the local domestic economy, promoting the regional integration of colonial Peru. Later, it remained only on the periphery of other important mining cycles, whose centres were located elsewhere (Pulacayo, Llallagua, San Cristóbal, etc.). With the fall of Potosí as the centre of this local economy, the mining production of Bolivia also became detached from the domestic economy and railways opened the path to external products and capital while closing those in which Indian population would trade local goods. This might be one of the origins of a long-standing idea, present in Potosí and elsewhere in Bolivia, that the local economy should benefit from the export of natural resources, either through industrialisation or by using the capital created from it for public works. While depopulation was a real nightmare for *potosinos*, being peripheral has also been a constant thorn in their sides, as the continuous symbolic (and physical, in the case of Coroma) dispute with Oruro demonstrates. During the twentieth century, all local mobilisations expressed a strong degree of regionalist character, focusing on recovering the symbolic importance of the colonial city and, perhaps paradoxically, on overcoming the dependent nature of the local economy, which was only enhanced in the republican period. The next section will

²⁷² Interview on 7 November 2013.

explore the identity of this regional actor and what it means to be *potosino* after these centuries of history.

Miner identity, peasant origins

When talking about the strength that sustained *potosinos* during the 19 days of mobilisation, Juan Vargas, a leader of the departmental federation of neighbourhood councils, identifies one major characteristic:

Everybody was able to resist. I believe [...] Potosí would be able to resist more, because it has always been considered a town that fights, a miner town, because Potosí has always had history. I believe that Potosí has this miner blood, which is able to endure and resist much more than the government.²⁷³

To have “this miner blood” (*esta sangre minera*) is a synonym for a long tradition of social struggle. As seen in El Alto, after Decree 21060, people from many other places in Bolivia started to identify with “miner blood”, since the state miners had migrated to the peripheries of the main cities of Bolivia - El Alto, Santa Cruz, Cochabamba - and also to some rural regions, such as the Chapare, to produce coca leaves.²⁷⁴ In contrast to these places, in Potosí, the miner inheritance does not come from elsewhere, but is immersed in the city’s landscape and history. Vladimir Cruz recounts that in his neighbourhood, named after San Martín parish, many ex-miner women helped to organise the struggle in 2010, together with younger activists:

This is a traditional miner zone and now as in the past the miner women leaders [*dirigentas mineras*], who had this trade union tradition, motivated the people, as well as the young, who also motivated the people, so a hunger strike picket was set up there [in San Martín church].²⁷⁵

The parish of San Martín is a colonial church, which was built to be the parish of *mitayos* from Chucuito, now in Peruvian territory. The miner neighbourhoods in Potosí are an inheritance of the old division of the city, in which *mitayos* settled in *rancherías* to the south and east of the city, closer to the Cerro Rico and to the mountains. However, these areas became identified with the mine workers in the twentieth century and reflected a more recent tradition of struggle:

²⁷³ Interview on 13 November 2013.

²⁷⁴ The idea of the miner inheritance as a major inspiration for the coca growers’ movement is present in much academic work (Escóbar, 2008, p. 141; Urquidi, 2007). Some scholars argue, however, that the number of actual ex-miners in Chapare is overestimated. Eduardo Córdova cites studies from the 1990s that have identified a proportion of 4%-5% of ex-miners among the coca growers (Iamamoto, 2008, p. 139).

²⁷⁵ Interview on 13 September 2013.

trade unionism. Omar Velasco, an experienced journalist of Radio Kollasuyo, emphasises the key role that miner inheritance plays in the *potosino* identity:

The miner is the protagonist of our economy, history and everything related to the society Potosí has, even art. (...) Without the *potosino* miner we cannot understand the history of Potosí, as we cannot understand the history of Bolivia without Potosí. So the mountain is a sort of a curse for us, we are and will always be miners. And the miner is the one who endangers his life, has nothing of his own, and learns to be solidary, defending himself and engaging in unionism. (...) So this is our socio-political, economic and cultural matrix. The miner is very important, but we mistreat him. Today it is very trendy to protect the environment, to complain about contamination. This demonises mining activities, but we cannot live without them. On what are we going to live? This coffee shop, the Kollasuyo radio, the departmental government, the city hall, everybody lives from mining production. So the miner is the *alma mater*, the essence of the *potosino* being.²⁷⁶

Unionism was a recent phenomenon in the history of Potosí. As in the whole of Bolivia, it only started during the tin cycle, at the beginning of the twentieth century. A century earlier and after the Independence War, the *mita* was formally abolished and this was one of the factors leading to the crisis of silver production in Bolivia's early republic (Tandeter, 1993, p. 222). By the end of the eighteenth century, already half the workers in the mining industry were *mingas* (free workers), considered by mine owners as undisciplined compared to *mitayos* (Tandeter, 1993, pp. 77–79). During the nineteenth century, mining entrepreneurs had to rely entirely on free workers, normally Indian peasants who came to the mining centres according to the agrarian calendar and so were scarce and difficult to recruit. To attract a labour force, mine owners tolerated practices such as the *kajcheos*, when workers exploited the mines to their own benefit during weekends or their free time, or lengthy religious festivities, which were all part of a “pact” between employers and employees (Rodríguez Ostria, 1991, pp. 28–34). With the second silver boom and its technological improvements, the workers' activities began to be strictly controlled by their employers. The *kajcheo*, now considered theft, was forbidden, and absences from work started to be controlled and punished. Also, mine owners began to recruit women and children to undertake worse-paid duties (Rodríguez Ostria, 1991, pp. 35–49). During the tin cycle, the lack of labour was solved, and between 1900 and 1920 the number of workers in the tin industry increased from 3,000 to 17,000 (Rodríguez Ostria, 1991, p. 62). However, this new contingent of mine workers started to organise their resistance with different methods from the previous century: massive unionisation, replied to with violence by the state and the mine owners.

Trade unionism increased after the Chaco War, a process partially engendered by the corporatist model of the military socialism of Toro, Busch and Villarroel, but also due to the

²⁷⁶ Interview on 7 November 2013.

development of the mine workers' own struggles (Rodríguez Ostria, 1991, p. 96). As a secondary, but still relevant, area for tin production, Potosí followed the national trend but was also influenced by important left-wing urban groups, active in Potosí before the war. In 1922, the Labour Socialist Party of Potosí celebrated the fact that Soux's workers were protesting against their employer (Lora, 1977, p. 108).²⁷⁷ A popular urban organisation, the Action Centre, was formed in the 1920s with anarchist leanings but later became influenced by the communists and was renamed, after the war, as the Popular Front of Potosí. As a result of the early penetration of left-wing parties and the articulation of a network of unions and popular organisations, the communist *Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left-Wing Party, PIR) also played an important role in the city during this period (Rodríguez Ostria, 1991, p. 98-100). By the end of the 1930s, both the workers of Hochschild's Unificada and the *kajchas* founded unions, the former organising around 2,000 people and the later around 800 (Rodríguez Ostria, 1991, p. 99). *Kajchas* was now a name given to the workers who explored the mines by themselves with the authorisation of the mine owners, since they paid a portion of their gains to them.

The 1952 revolution changed the lives of Potosí's mine workers. With the nationalisation of the mines, Unificada and its workers became part of COMIBOL. Also, the new government encouraged cooperativism, since it considered cooperatives a solution to unemployment. In the late 1970s, the *kajchas'* unions converted themselves into cooperatives, which had been regulated by a general law since 1958 (Absi, 2005, p. 26). During the military dictatorships, cooperativists and COMIBOL workers held different ideological positions, since the latter were opposed to the regime and the former considered themselves "apolitical", indirectly supporting the military governments.

Thus, both traditional trade unionism and cooperativism are deeply rooted in the history of the city, even though they went through significant changes during the twentieth century. As seen in the last section, the dismissal of state miners with Decree 21060 had a great impact on the city since thousands of workers were employed in the Unificada mine. The cooperative miners then started to become a major social force, as underlined by Guillermo Condori, one of the leaders of the sector:

We are a big organisation. We practically replaced the Federation of Miners, after the 21060 (...). The cooperatives were there in the good and the bad times, moving forward, we didn't disappear, we didn't stop working. That's the reason why we feel we replace the mine workers, particularly in the Potosí department.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ This was a significant change of attitude, considering that only a couple of years before, in 1917, the same workers and their families, around 3,600 people, were used by Soux as mass support during the national elections and in other political struggles in Potosí (Flores Castro, 2002).

²⁷⁸ Interview on 7 November 2013.

According to Absi, the cooperative miners (or *kajchas* in the past) gained importance in the economy whenever the dominant mining sector was in crisis, spreading the economic risks of mining activity among the labour force, a pattern that could also be seen after 1985 (Absi, 2005, pp. 20–21). However, the increasing protagonism of the sector was also due to the fact that former state miners established a number of cooperatives themselves (Absi, 2005, p. 28) and brought their radicalism into the cooperative movement. In 1995, after a couple of decades without participating in national struggles, the cooperative miners re-affiliated to the COB (Absi, 2005, pp. 26–27). Later, they participated in many national and local mobilisations, such as the one in Sucre in 2005 to demand new elections, when a cooperative miner was killed.

Despite this increasing political engagement, the cooperative mining sector is highly criticised for its lack of internal democracy and the distortions it displays compared to the cooperative model. Cooperative associates [*socios cooperativistas*] are a privileged minority in the sector, who employ other workers to exploit areas assigned to them. These workers are paid a percentage of production, by number of days worked or by the task carried out, and they suffer very hard working conditions and lack of social security. They are not members of the cooperatives and have no right to vote in the assemblies of the sector, which can cause a great conflict between the interests of the majority of people working within the cooperative economy and the interests shown by the associate members (Absi, 2005, pp. 28–31). Data from Ferrufino *et al* indicates that these “second category” cooperative miners could account for 80% of the sector (2011, p. 158). According to Absi, the management autonomy enjoyed by cooperative miners reflects more a “dream to become a small employer [*pequeño patrón*]” than a “project of self-managed society characteristic of the cooperativism” (2005, p. 28). Jorge Solares, member of the COD-Potosí, agrees, calling the sector “alleged cooperative miners, (...) who are in fact businessmen that employ other people without guaranteeing their social rights”.²⁷⁹

If miner identity is complex in Potosí, with at least three different points of reference - the *mitayo* colonial experience, the state miner and the cooperative miner – the other main source of identity, peasant and indigenous, is no less intricate. During the *mita* era, the relationship between mining and the indigenous identity was more direct, since by definition *mitayos* were indigenous men who came from particular ethnic groups, the Indian *reducciones*. Later, as free workers, the Indian people would use mining to complement their agricultural activities, as noted by Gutiérrez for the nineteenth century (1991, p. 30) and Albó and Harris for

²⁷⁹ Interview on 11 September 2013.

the twentieth century in North Potosí (1984). The city of Potosí, which had experienced considerable population growth in the previous decades, was also a centre for rural immigrants and many of them engaged in mining activities. According to Vladimir Cruz, this migrant experience, from the rural indigenous countryside to the mining city, represents *potosino* identity in a condensed way:

Potosino identity is complex. (...) It is still marked by mining and by the indigenous people that live in the city and work inside the mine. So, this Andean agrarian society is still present, but the people that come from it enter the mine and, in miserable conditions, are proletarianised, because they come into contact with capitalist society. (...) At the same time, they are indigenous, they go back to their communities and live from agrarian production relations.²⁸⁰

Absi notes a much tenser relationship between indigenous and miner identities. Peasant migrants are received in the mines as “ignorant” people, while older miners understand themselves as “civilised”. According to her, this discrimination against the peasants is “motivated by the need to adopt a dominant position of a middle class that embodies its desire of social promotion”, characteristic of the cooperative sector (Absi, 2005, p. 51). Curiously, Absi states that 57% of the cooperative miners come from rural provinces, while 40% come from the city of Potosí and are from families with a miner tradition (Absi, 2005, p. 34). Thus, the majority of the people working in the sector are migrants and still have a strong relationship with their original peasant communities. This characteristic enables a higher mobility of these workers, since it is easier for them to come back to their peasant lives in times of crisis.

Other sectors of *potosino* society, such as the professional classes, reflect older migration patterns. According to Cruz, the “middle classes” in Potosí also have indigenous origins, but are from a third or fourth generation in the city, so have already lost the “linguistic characteristic that defines somehow the indigenous, the belonging, but they are nonetheless marked by the mining and the agrarian indigenous process”.²⁸¹ Some of the leaders interviewed were second generation city-dwellers, such as Jhonny Llally:

I come from an indigenous class, but live here in the city, I was born here in the city and these clothes [urban, Western clothes] were given to me by my father. My father used to dress *poncho* and *abarca*,²⁸² and I say this with pride and honesty, I cannot lie. The indigenous does not pretend, but shows with his clothing the respect for his community.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Interview on 13 September 2013.

²⁸¹ Interview on 13 September 2013.

²⁸² *Abarca* is a sandal made of tyre rubber that lasts for many years and is used in the countryside in the whole of Bolivia.

²⁸³ Interview on 9 September 2013.

In this characterisation, Llally identifies clothing as being the most important element of the indigenous identity. As in El Alto, there is some identification with the indigenous world, which indicates the activist's origins, but it is also depicted as something external, different, from the urban life in Potosí. Nevertheless, different from El Alto, Potosí is an old colonial city which has a long history of segregation and prejudice towards indigenous people, which happens outside the mines as well. In this sense, it is more similar to La Paz, the *q'ara* city that was besieged by Tupac Katari, understood in opposition to its popular neighbourhoods and El Alto. Celestino Condori narrates an episode which shows a pervasive ethnic discrimination:

I was disappointed by the MAS government. (...) In university, I suffered in my own flesh [*en carne propia*] (...). Because I supported Evo and the government during the most vulnerable years, between 2005 and 2008, I heard from people, the same ones that are now in the government, that we were 'Indians', they insulted us. Why? Because we supported the change that our country requires. I didn't care that they called me 'Indian', (...) but I supported the change. The disappointing thing is that we supported him [Evo Morales], but he didn't understand the changes we wanted here.²⁸⁴

Here, indigeneity is equated with the MAS government and Evo Morales, which stand also as synonym for a broader and more inclusive political project that faced resistance from local urban and academic elites. In any case, the emphasis on the indigenous was part of a national project, represented by the idea of the "process of change" and by the new constitution, approved in a national referendum in 2009, which established the "indigenous native peasant communities" as subjects of special rights:

And for that reason, when once and for all Goni leaves the country, national elections are brought forward and we think that a government of indigenous native peasant [indígena originaria campesina] extraction, and on top of that [Evo Morales was] a coca union leader, who fought on a number of occasions with us, have to fulfill the agenda that he himself put forward. Nowadays virtually all of that political platform is getting diverted, because we see clearly that our indigenous native peasant comrades [*compañeros*] are not in power.²⁸⁵

By equating the MAS government with indigeneity, the local actors in Potosí show an understanding of it as something external, part of the national politics and not particularly constitutive of the local identity, even when they recognise that the indigenous sectors are important. The indigenous identity, understood as a peasant one, is at odds with the urban miner identity of the city of Potosí, even if its inhabitants recognise that they have peasant and indigenous origins. Potosí holds a very strong relationship with its colonial past which determines that local identity is not only characterised by the specific activities carried out in the city (mining) but also by popular understandings of the role of the local economy in the

²⁸⁴ Interview on 10 September 2013.

²⁸⁵ Jorge Solares, interview on 11 September 2013.

national sphere and a sense of injustice that emerges from this relationship. The next section will explore this perception and the political project that emerges from it, “federal Potosí”.

Federalism, development and the nation

“*Potosino* identity is a wound that is constantly bleeding” states Vladimir Cruz when trying to explain the local socio-political formation and why people mobilised so spontaneously during the 19 days.²⁸⁶ He makes reference to a popular perception of lack of development, since *potosinos* are identified as very poor people in the national imaginary. During recent decades, many peasant women from North Potosí have migrated seasonally to the urban centres in La Paz or Cochabamba to complement their economy with begging or selling products on the streets. Thus, being a “beggar” (*limosnero*) has become a characteristic related to *potosinos*.

The discontent with this situation does not come only because of a general condemnation of poverty and misery, but also because the poorest one is precisely Potosí, considered such a rich department in terms of its natural resources. There is a common proverb that says that the *potosino* is a “poor man sitting in a chair of gold” (*hombre pobre sentado en un sillón de oro*), which explains why the identity “bleeds”, because of a rooted popular perception of the contrast between what Potosí should be and what it actually is. The culprit in this situation is the national government, which profits from the exploration of the natural resources in Potosí, but this wealth is not returned to the country.

The demand for a “federal” political organisation comes from the perception that the national government has “failed” to promote local development and to redistribute resources. Many activists agree that one of the essential problems of the department was that the royalties received from mining were very limited, compared to the royalties received by departments that explored natural gas:

We have to exploit our natural resources ourselves, they have to be industrialised, their profits have to benefit all *potosinos*. They should not go to the central government so we receive only crumbs. From everything we extract, only crumbs come back to us. If we consider, for example, that Tarija receives from the government 11% of the hydrocarbon tax. We receive only 4%, when we are the ones giving more. (...) Hydrocarbons and minerals are the main support for our country. What can we do with 4%? If we talk about factories, we can count them with our fingers. We have two factories, but mini-factories, mini-industries, a beer factory and a pasta factory. What else do we have? We have nothing. And the factories are the ones able to make the people move forward with development. This is what we demanded as *potosinos*.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Interview on 13 September 2013.

²⁸⁷ Emilio Elias, interview on 25 September 2013.

The testimony above depicts a feeling that attaches the department's poverty and underdevelopment to the lack of industrialisation. However, the topic of mining royalties was not clearly presented as a demand of the mobilisation, owing to internal conflicts within the popular sector. The rise in these royalties would mean fewer benefits for the cooperative sector, so an increase in the department's revenue from this sort of tax was far from a consensual demand. Elias's reasoning assumes that, with the federalisation of the country, the department would benefit from greater resources for local industrialisation, seen as the preferential door to exit poverty.

As noted while analysing the local economic structure of the city and the department, it is astonishing that poverty is almost solely understood in terms of a lack of industrial development, despite the fact that Potosí also has the worst national statistics for social rights, especially in terms of access to education and health. Perhaps the concentration of movement in the city of Potosí has also contributed to this, since it suffers less than the countryside from a lack of basic services.²⁸⁸ Its activists prioritise a view of development that necessarily includes the production of products with added value in order to avoid a dependent economy. In this respect, they are truly representatives of a broader Bolivian tradition of left wing developmentalism that identifies industrialisation and "productive investment" as the main keys to the future. While criticising the government of Evo Morales, Jorge Solares exemplifies this position:

We think that there are other currents that have definitely seized this process of change [*proceso de cambio*], whose focus is being diverted. Because of that, the natural resources, especially the non-renewable, such as minerals and oil, are still practically under the control of the big transnational enterprises. That's why living conditions don't get better, because there is not production investment coming exclusively from the government. The public investment that is being made until this moment is to make sports fields in the communities.²⁸⁹

All these testimonies indicate a double relationship with the national government, which oscillates between antagonism and identification. On one hand, since the republic was founded, it has represented a main political antagonist that takes the natural resources of Potosí without giving anything in return, as the Spanish Crown did in the past. The frustrated initiatives of industrialisation promoted by the national government in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Karachipampa, are seen as mere "deceits" (*engaños*): "The problem of Karachipampa is that the plant hasn't been working for over 30 years. So there we see that it was a swindle, a constant

²⁸⁸ The HDI of Potosí is higher than El Alto and Achacachi, for example.

²⁸⁹ Interview on 11 September 2013.

swindle by the government. The highways that we were promised (...) were delivered to a certain degree, but it still isn't satisfactory."²⁹⁰ Thus, the national government is depicted as being an unfair institution, which has a "historical debt with the department of Potosí", in the words of Guillermo Condori,²⁹¹ echoing the same expressions used by *alteños* to explain why Chile was an unpopular nation.

On the other hand, Bolivia as a nation is not seen as an antagonist. *Potosinos* see themselves as Bolivians and share the memories that are constitutive of Bolivian nationhood. Rodolfo Velasco makes a more explicit reference to the War of the Pacific when explaining the symbolic strength of the local petition: "As the maritime demand unifies all of us, Bolivians, here our old local demands helped us to have the population gathered together around these aspirations."²⁹² Omar Velasco is even clearer in characterising the double affiliation, national and regional, of the *potosino*:

I'd look at the other side of the coin and would say: I am *potosino* to the bones and Bolivian to the marrow because we love our country, we want to prosper with Bolivia. (...) We were born at the foot of this mountain as a mining camp and in 400 years we have managed to obtain our own identity as *potosinos* and Bolivians. And what I know best is my land and I don't understand Bolivia and its history if I don't understand the history of Potosí. There is no Bolivian social movement in which a *potosino* has not given his life. We have been in all of the wars.^{293 294}

In this context, Evo Morales' government was also perceived in a contradictory way. Because of the government's attacks on the movement during the 19 days, it was seen as arrogant and disrespectful to the region, close to the position of previous neoliberal governments, as explains Celestino Condori:

The worst detail was the government's arrogance. (...) With Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, with the previous governments, they said first stop the mobilisation and then we can negotiate. The president [Evo Morales] said exactly the same thing [in 2010]. And when he came in [started his mandate in 2006] he said 'no, such things should stop, we are going to govern obeying the people'.²⁹⁵

However, activists did not consider Evo Morales' government to be the same as previous governments. Most of them expressed a feeling of being betrayed, since the department had

²⁹⁰ Emilio Elias, interview on 25 September 2013.

²⁹¹ Interview on 7 November 2013.

²⁹² Interview on 27 September 2013.

²⁹³ Interview on 7 November 2013.

²⁹⁴ When he talks about "bones" and "marrow", he makes reference to an Italian Franciscan priest, Padre Zampa, creator of the Escuelas de Cristo, who used to say, "I'm Bolivian to the bones and *potosino* to the marrow" to demonstrate his loyalty to his adopted nation and department (Natalini, n.d.).

²⁹⁵ Interview on 10 September 2013.

supported the MAS in the last presidential elections with 78% of the local valid votes. Some did not blame Morales directly, but identified the ministers and advisors as the guilty ones, who were “lying” to the president.²⁹⁶ As seen in the testimonies of Celestino Condori and Jorge Solares quoted above, many local activists politically identified with the MAS before the mobilisation and kept claiming their attachment to the “process of change”. Thus, activists in Potosí play an active part in national politics.

“Federal Potosí” is a slogan that carries the same tensions. First, it is interesting to note that activists are not demanding a “federal Bolivia”, even though the position entails a federalisation of the country. It means that their petition comes from the region and from its particularities, it is not a national project. The vast majority, when asked what they would gain from federalisation, answer that they would be able to manage their own resources without the interference of the national government.²⁹⁷ This would be the main difference from the already existing departmental autonomies, which were included in the constitution of 2009 but judged as insufficient, since the resources still go to the national treasury and are only later redistributed to the departments.²⁹⁸ Besides, departmental autonomies are also perceived as part of the agenda of right-wing regionalist sectors of the lowlands, who are labelled “separatists”. *Potosinos* supported the MAS agenda against departmental autonomies when a

²⁹⁶ Jhonny Lally: “We started the mobilisation again and gave an opportunity to Evo Morales, but unfortunately his ministers for sure haven’t informed him” (interview on 9 September 2013); Benigno Castillo: “We already wanted to talk to the president, because the ministers didn’t provide technical and economic solutions, but have only (...) lied to people. This is the truth” (interview on 11 September 2013). Jorge Solares: “We believe that people lied to the government, people that surrounded it [*en su entorno*] and that are even from here” (interview on 11 September 2013).

²⁹⁷ Jhonny Lally: “We ourselves have to spend our own resources, invest our resources according to the primary materials we have, according to our mineral deposits, various minerals, that would allow us to become independent” (interview on 9 September 2013); Jorge Solares: “To manage our own resources. In other words, to live with what we have ourselves, that people stop taking them [our resources] away from us, that they do not leave [Potosí]. In other words, to be capable by ourselves” (interview on 11 September 2013); Gregorio Flores: “[Compared to autonomy,] federalism is completely independent; the government shouldn’t touch a bit of our natural resources” (interview on 12 September 2013); Adolfo Vara: “We understand ‘federal’ as (...) a department where we can manage our resources, where we can define our own norms, but of course, based on the basic norms of the state” (interview on 25 September 2013); Emilio Elias: “On the other hand undertake to exploit and benefit from our natural resources for ourselves, so that they may be industrialised, and our profits from all of this, of all of this investment (...) must benefit all *potosinos*, rather than going to the central government and leaving us the scraps” (interview on 25 September 2013).

²⁹⁸ Benigno Castillo: “In autonomy, all resources go directly to the national treasury. This is not autonomy” (interview on 11 September 2013); Francisco Portillo: “They say autonomy but the central government keeps managing the resources. For this they give us royalties, IDH [*impuesto directo a los hidrocarburos*, a direct tax on hydrocarbons], all these things” (interview on 13 September 2013); Adolfo Vara: “Autonomous, we are still, let’s say, restricted to certain situations. We generate resources, and these resources still go to the state, and the state redistributes to the nine departments” (interview on 25 September 2013).

referendum on the issue was carried out in 2006.²⁹⁹ The region kept supporting the government until the constituent assembly, in which the dichotomy between the right-wing autonomist eastern lowlands and the left-wing national government played a larger role in defining local affiliations:

So we approved a state political constitution without studying it much. We approved it in a more political way, because we had to safeguard national unity, because if we were against approving the constitution, the autonomists, supposedly, were going to (...) say 'no, we declare ourselves independent'.³⁰⁰

"Separatism", thus, is a word that *potosinos* want to distance themselves from and activists were unanimous in emphasising their nationalism and the difference between their federalism and the separatist project. "'Federal Potosí' means that we want to practise our independence without forgetting our nation (...). We're Bolivians and proud of it", explains Jhonny Llally.³⁰¹ However, many pointed to the danger of the government's centralism, which caused some minor separatist feelings: "Some people thought that we should ally with Chile, not be part of Bolivia anymore. Argentina and Chile, that's it. Even that [extremism] was mentioned."³⁰² These remarks represent a warning to the national government: to take Potosí's claims more seriously, otherwise "anti-national" tendencies would emerge.

In general, it is agreed that the idea of "federal Potosí" still needs to be discussed further, that it is more a slogan, a political aspiration, than a finite project. Some activists see difficulties in implementing a departmental project, particularly because of the lack of interaction between city and countryside. One leader of a street traders' organisation identifies the need to move beyond the 2010 petition and be more inclusive of peasant and indigenous sectors:

For this reason, I think we have to look for alternatives, proposals, in order to fight for it and not only the six demands now being asked for. It's not simply that, not anymore. (...) I think that a deeper analysis must be done, and more than anything else, integrate the city with provinces of the department so as to fight with one objective in mind. The needs [must be] according to our reality, according to our way of life, let's say, up to date so as to be able to see a future, with better days.³⁰³

"Federal Potosí" is, then, a project that still needs to be negotiated with the rural and indigenous sectors of the department, which tend to have a much more favourable perspective of the national government. Moreover, it needs to be discussed further with other regions, such

²⁹⁹ The "no" to departmental autonomy won in Potosí with 73.1%, almost the same percentages that it received in Oruro (75.5%) and in La Paz (73.4%), other important MAS strongholds (Mayorga Ugarte, 2006).

³⁰⁰ Celestino Condori, interview on 10 September 2013.

³⁰¹ Interview on 9 September 2013.

³⁰² Francisco Portillo, interview on 13 September 2013.

³⁰³ Anonymous 13, interview on 6 November 2013.

as North Potosí and the southwest of the department, where the rich reserves of lithium in the Uyuni Salt Lake and the San Cristóbal mine are located. What is curious about this demand is the fact that it is precisely the city of Potosí, which used to be the centre of the colonial economy for so many years, that is now demanding a decentralised government. The department of Potosí in current days is, ironically, a small version of Bolivia: a department with its own problems of internal cohesion, in which provinces and municipalities complain about the “centralism” of the departmental government, based in the capital Potosí. Whole regions, such as the southwest and the north, did not join the mobilisation and, at times, even criticised it.³⁰⁴

“Federal Potosí” appears as a means to bring about industrial development, an objective shared by the majority of the Bolivian left groups, including MAS. What has changed since the first Morales administration is how people perceive the best ways to achieve such development. Thus, at the beginning of the MAS government, standing with the country’s left-wing was a priority for the city and for its social organisations. After its first term, the MAS consolidated its power and *potosinos* began to prioritise their regional demands, either because the poverty of the region did not decrease as expected or because the new economic “bonanza” related to the mining industry was not reflected in local development, as discussed earlier.

During the last few years, politics in the department of Potosí have been intensely marked by the contradiction of supporting the national “process of change” but also taking a regionalist position in a centralised state. In October 2014 and March 2015, *potosinos* demonstrated electoral attachment to MAS again. Evo Morales was re-elected in the department with 66% (12% less than 2009) in 2014, and in 2015, the MAS candidate, Juan Carlos Cejas, won the departmental elections with 56% (10% less than Felix Gonzáles in 2010, the former MAS governor). Even in the city of Potosí, the new mayor, William Cervantes, elected with 34%, was from MAS (Cuevas, 2015; Mena, 2015; Morales Peña, 2014).³⁰⁵ The mobilisation caused some electoral corrosion to MAS, but neither “federal Potosí” nor the six demands were

³⁰⁴ Even though many peasant and indigenous groups in rural provinces such as Betanzos, Yura and Coroma supported and participated in the struggle, there was a fracture in the mobilisation in other areas. In the region of the Uyuni Salt Lake, the local peasant federation, Federación Regional Única de Trabajadores Campesinos del Altiplano Sud (FRUTCAS), and the mayor of Uyuni municipality, Froilán Condori, attempted to negotiate separately with the government, rejecting the radicality of *coromeños* and COMCIPO (El Potosí, 2010g). Later, the president of the indigenous federation of North Potosí declared their unconditional support for Morales and threatened to besiege Potosí if the leaders did not reach an agreement in Sucre. Peasant groups in Millares forced a caravan carrying leaders of the mobilisation to return to Sucre when they were making their way back to Potosí because of a failed attempt to negotiate (El Potosí, 2010o).

³⁰⁵ Juan Carlos Cejas, the new elected governor, was one of the MAS deputies who participated in the hunger strike in La Paz in 2010. MAS’s impressive electoral result, after the frustrated 2010 mobilisation, is partially due to the amalgamation between the main opposing political organisation, the AS, and the MAS for the 2014-15 elections. René Joaquino, the former mayor of Potosí and leader of AS, who was investigated during 2010, was elected senator under MAS in 2014.

enough for the articulation of an alternative political platform for 2014 and 2015. This alternation of positions regarding the national government can only be understood if we consider that there is not such a great distance between the political projects of Evo Morales and the activists of Potosí, both left-wing and developmentalist. However, only a couple of months later, in July 2015, COMCIPO once again launched a civic strike with a petition of 26 points. This time, the tactic was to go to La Paz and force a negotiation with the government. The reaction of the Morales administration was very similar to what had happened in 2010, treating the movement with contempt. Public opinion, however, seemed to be more sensitised to the movement, which gathered 59% of national support (Layme, 2015b). The movement now gained more dramatic features, since the economy in the department and in the country as whole has started to contract with the low prices of minerals and natural resources (Peralta Miranda, 2015).

The 19 days in 2010 had a dramatic impact on people's lives, and, as seen in these recent protests, appear to be the first in a series of regional mobilisations which are still struggling to find a clearer political project. Immediately after the negotiations were concluded in Sucre in August 2010, *El Potosí's* editorial celebrated the return of regional pride, as if the mobilisation inaugurated a "second history" of the department (El Potosí, 2010q). It is clear that the mobilisation in 2010 will have a long-standing impact on the political imaginary of the actors involved, giving new life to old stories of greatness and decadence, in which the struggle against forgetting is perhaps the most important one. These are the topics of the next chapter, dedicated to the memory of colonial Potosí, the Imperial City of Charles V.

CHAPTER SEVEN – THE IMPERIAL CITY OF CHARLES V

*I am the king of the hills,
I am the envy of all kings.
They call me Imperial City,
also the great Potosí
From my entrails they took
four centuries of pain
I have eight brothers and sisters,
I am the pillar of the nation.
Only rubble remains of me.
Let me be federal.³⁰⁶*

This *cueca* was sung to me by Omar Velasco, cited as an example of popular songs during the 19 days. It encapsulates the main elements of *potosino* identity: a past of colonial greatness and suffering, followed by a faded republican experience, in which a slow decadence condemns the city to ashes, unless it becomes “federal”. This chapter analyses the memory of the Imperial City, the title given by Charles V to Potosí at the end of the sixteenth century, held up to the present day by its inhabitants as a proud memory of the past. The famous *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, written by Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela at the beginning of the eighteenth century, is a main point of reference for this regional memory. The deep contrasts that impregnate the tales - irreconcilable dualisms of God and evil, abundance and decadence, religious piety and bloody violence (Padden, 1975) - depict a moralist view of the cycle of the exploitation of natural resources, in which opulence is replaced by emptiness because of human sins.

As with the previous cases of Tupac Katari and the War of the Pacific, we will first see the ways in which this colonial heritage was used as a platform that expressed demands, supported the mobilisation and created a sense of community around its petition. Three main themes related to the colonial city - richness, decay and suffering – gained new lives and interpretations during the 19 days. Then, we will explore how this memory travelled from the past to the present, to become one of the most iconic narratives defining not only the *potosino*, but also Bolivian identity. Finally, we will see how this memory is related to the everyday lives of contemporary inhabitants of the city.

Potosinos are aware of the importance of colonial Potosí as a national symbol, so they attach their current survival to its remembering. More than a fossilised memory of the past, they want it to become the justification for their future development. Potosí suffered because of its

³⁰⁶ This is a *cueca* called *Potosí Federal*, written by Justino Tórrez and sung by the group Los del Huayra in the 1970s (El Potosí, 2015). In Spanish: “Soy el rey de todos los montes, envidia soy de los Reyes. Me llaman Villa Imperial, también el gran Potosí. De mis entrañas sacaron cuatro siglos de dolor. Tengo ocho por hermanos, soy el sostén nacional. Sólo escombros me quedan. Déjenme ser federal.”

greatness and now Bolivia, and perhaps the whole world, is held accountable for this historical debt to the city. This is the reason why recalling their history is so important for *potosinos*: their struggle is against forgetting.

A silver bridge to Spain

As seen in the previous chapter, one of the defining features of *potosino* identity is the historic wealth of the region. Many activists expressed this idea through the metaphor of a “dairy cow”, explained by Benigno Castillo: “All the people say: Potosí is the permanent dairy cow, which generates milk, but the *potosino* people don’t make use of it. So, this is a vision we have had for a long time.”³⁰⁷

Through this image, Potosí’s resources sustained Bolivia and, before that, Spain. “We cannot be forgotten, since a lot of wealth was taken from the insides of our mountain, not only to Bolivians, but also to Latin America and Europe. Our wealth (...) strengthened many countries there in the old world”, states Emilio Elias.³⁰⁸ Perhaps the most popular image of this wealth was the silver bridge: “The Spanish have taken a lot of silver from this mountain. People say that a bridge could have been built from Potosí to Spain, just with this silver.”³⁰⁹

These references are far from just popular sayings, they are present in well-known depictions of Potosí. One of the most famous is Eduardo Galeano’s *Open Veins of Latin America*, which constructs its argument on Potosí precisely around the idea that the city was a dairy cow: “Spaniards owned the cow, but others drank the milk”, referring to how other European nations profited highly from the business. He also writes about the myth of the silver bridge, crediting it to “excessive enthusiastic Bolivian writers”, but acknowledging the “gigantic dimensions” of the flow of silver (Galeano, 1973, pp. 22–23). Actually, the statement comes from the Spanish chronicler Antonio de León Pinelo, who wrote in 1650 that with the resources taken by Spain it was possible to build a bridge 14 *varas* wide (around 12 metres) and four fingers thick from Potosí to Madrid (León Pinelo, 1943, p. 371).³¹⁰ The imaginary bridge was then recalled a number of times, such as in the celebrated novel *Metal del Diablo*, by Augusto Céspedes in 1946. In the novel, one of the characters states “a silver bridge indeed, but parallel to it, another bridge of

³⁰⁷ Interview on 11 September 2013. A leader of the neighbourhood movement (anonymous 11, interview on 25 September 2015) and Emilio Elias (interview on 25 September 2013) also defined the department as a “dairy cow”.

³⁰⁸ Interview on 25 September 2013.

³⁰⁹ Jorge Solares, interview on 11 September 2013.

³¹⁰ Jorge Espinoza Morales compared the amount of silver extracted from Potosí from its discovery until Pinelo’s time and concluded that it would only be possible to build a circular bar 2.2 centimetres in diameter (2010, p. 263).

bones could have been built, as wide as the former, with the bodies of the *mitayos* that died in the mines” (1974, p. 40).

Lewis Hanke called this inclination to “glorify and magnify” everything related to the city the *fiebre potosina* (fever of Potosí) (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. xxxii) and Arzáns was undoubtedly one of great exponents of this tendency. In one of his chronicles, he describes how the city’s notables appeared for their duels with a magnificent display of wealth: saddles, sashes and tunics were all embroidered with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and pearls (Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, 1975, pp. 15–16). In 1787, the chronicler Pedro Vicente Cañete y Domínguez enumerated the opulence of the city’s past: eight million pesos were spent during the coronation festivities of Charles V and dowries could reach up to two million pesos. He complains that in his own day, by contrast, even dowries of 50,000 pesos no longer existed (Cañete y Domínguez, 1952, p. 37).

Another colonial story that feeds the imagination of *potosinos* today is the “Treasure of Rocha”. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Francisco da Rocha was arrested for forgery. Legend has it that his personal treasure, buried in a cave around the city of Potosí was kept by his Indian mistress. In act of revenge, she hanged Rocha’s Spanish mistress inside the cave and, unable to exit, she died of hunger and thirst. Centuries later, the two bodies and the treasure were found by an Indian, who was later able to tell the story but not to point out the exact location of the cave.³¹¹ Today, the treasure of Rocha is perhaps the most known traditional legend of Potosí and people still look for it in the city’s outskirts.³¹²

All these narratives have in common the depiction of a magnificent fortune, difficult to translate into numbers. The appeal of the Pinelo’s silver bridge lies in the fact that the numbers are turned into an incredible image which covers a distance that is unimaginable in terms of people’s graspable experiences with space. The depictions created by these stories are indeed “feverish”, to use Hanke’s definition, they seem beyond rationality, as if the city was in a permanent state of uncontrol.

³¹¹ The legend was first written in the *Crónicas Potosinas*, by Vicente G. Quesada, in 1890. They appear in letters without specific reference to the authorship (Quesada, 1890b, pp. 431–490). In 1919, Modesto Omiste attributed them to Juana Manuela Gorriti de Belzu (1992a, p. 382). Omiste also publishes another version of the legend from Julio Lucas Jaimes (1992b, pp. 84–98). More recently, Wilson Mendieta Pacheco (1988, pp. 94–98) included the story in their compilation of traditions and legends of the city. Arzáns is a common source of these accounts, since he writes that Rocha’s hidden treasure of 7,000,000 pesos was never found by the authorities after his death and has remained lost ever since (Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, 1965b, pp. 122–133).

³¹² A whole novel based on the legend was launched recently by Fred Staff (2011), who also claims to have looked for the treasure (Opinión, 2011).

Campamento minero: *the fear of depopulation*

Everything is finished, all is affliction and anguish, weeping and sighing. Without doubt this has been one of the greatest downfalls ever to overtake one of the world's peoples: to see such diversity, such incomparable wealth turn to dust, to become nothing (Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, 1965b, pp. 322–323).³¹³

Depopulation was by far the greatest fear of all the disasters that have fallen upon Potosí. Being a mining city, whose future was totally dependent on the resources taken from the Cerro Rico, this nightmare became a reality a couple of times in its history. By the time Arzáns wrote these lines, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the population of Potosí was only a third of the 160,000 people that had been living in the city a century earlier. That, however, would not be the worst of its days, which arrived at the end of the Independence Wars, when, as we have seen, only 9,000 brave inhabitants persisted in the city. Even in the middle of the colonial period, *potosinos* had already experienced not only a considerable shrinkage in population and decline in silver production but also a major flood caused by the failure of Caricari dam, which killed more than 2,000 people and destroyed hundreds of houses in 1626 (Gioda, Serrano, & Frey, 1998, p. 75) and the gang warfare between *vicuñas* and *vascongados*, which also occurred in the first decades of the seventeenth century and terrified the city, with dozens of lives lost every time a conflict was sparked.³¹⁴

Nonetheless, the unavoidably slow decadence of mining economic cycles, with resources relentlessly drained for decades, even centuries, and the knowledge that one day these resources would be finished, has given local narratives of history a particularly dramatic flavour. For the colonial chronicler, it was God's justice that was punishing Potosí for its sins:

The inhabitants of Potosí committed grave sins against God, so for a third time they forced divine justice to unleash (though with piety) the whip of its wrath over this city, at the hands of a rigorous mind that brought down to earth (the suitable place for feet) the wealth and pomp of its *vecinos* and other inhabitants. Such a fall was this that until today the city has not been able to rise again and only the powerful hand of God will be enough to return it to its old splendour, because this fall was followed by others. So, overwhelmed and without strength, this city is almost unable to say "I am the greatest in wealth" [*Yo soy la grande en riquezas*], but only: "I was [the greatest in wealth], and my arrogance has left me now at rock bottom" (Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, 1965b, p. 123).

³¹³ The translation appears in Padden (1975, p. xxxi).

³¹⁴ Basques (*vascongados*) concentrated their economic and political power in the city of Potosí, provoking the hostility of other Spanish nationalities - Andalusian, Castilians, and *extremeños* (from Extremadura) - and Creoles. The disadvantaged group was called *vicuñas* (Mesa et al., 1997, pp. 156–158). Episodes of this gang warfare are narrated in 'A Tale of Sound and Fury' and 'Blood for Blood' in the selection of Arzáns' work in English (1975, pp. 13–26).

The anxiety brought by these images of decay is very present in contemporary popular imagination, since the city still depends considerably on mining activities inside the Cerro Rico. Instead of using the vocabulary of fall and divine punishment, the current inhabitants of Potosí prefer a more modern image to depict the fear of depopulation: the mining camp (*campamento minero*).

We are done, if we have no more mining royalties. I know that Potosí could remain a mining camp. We won't have anything. This will die like Telamayu, 7 Suyos, Ánimas, all have died. If there are no longer royalties, this will be like an open camp, where nobody works. And this is how they want us to see Potosí. We will not allow this any longer.³¹⁵

This activist cites the names of former mines that were closed during the twentieth century, combining the old fears of Potosí with the experience of the mining closures after Decree 21060.³¹⁶ She accuses the government of actively promoting the city's decay, a resentment investigated earlier. It is interesting to note the meaning acquired by "mining camp" in this context, since it would normally refer to the precarious situation of a town built around a mine. In the narratives of the 2010 activists, it becomes a synonym of depopulation itself, stating clearly how much the conception of mining is entangled with its unavoidable decline. Emilio Elias expresses this perception of the mining cycle and its consequences for Potosí:

Because we not only think in the now, but also in tomorrow and far beyond. We want to leave something solid for our children. We won't think the way we do now, dig out all of our resources and that tomorrow all that remains is a mining camp. If the minerals dry up, where are we left? If there is no industry, all the people will go elsewhere, so what will remain is a ghost town, like a Pulacayo. Now, with the recent renewal of mining activity, we know that mining has its ups and its downs, but we want to stay. We were born here, we live, we want to contribute and we also want to die here as good *potosinos*.³¹⁷

Nevertheless, the fear of depopulation is not particular to Potosí; it has been a common theme in human history and is "almost as old as states themselves" (Coleman & Rowthorn, 2011, p. 217). In modern Western history, it has been expressed through newspaper articles, official campaigns and literature and it peaked between 1870 and 1940, according to Teitelbaum and Winter (1987). In a world of increasing militarism, intellectuals and politicians in Europe and the United States were worried about the strength of their nations and promoted various policies to increase the fertility of desirable "citizens", which excluded working class and immigrant families (Teitelbaum & Winter, 1987, pp. 13–62). After World War II, the worries related to

³¹⁵ Activist of the neighbourhood movement, anonymous 11, interview on 25 September 2013.

³¹⁶ These former mines are in the municipality of Atocha, Sud Chichas province. They were very important mines of the Aramayo family and had their activities interrupted by the Decree 21060, in 1985.

³¹⁷ Interview on 25 September 2013.

population decline decreased, before reappearing in the 1980s, with an increased European anxiety over immigrants, reflected in the anti-immigration statements of the conservative politician Enoch Powell in Britain (1987, p. 136).

The decline of the population is not only dependent on birth and fertility but also on mortality and migration (Teitelbaum & Winter, 1987, p. 4). In the case of mortality, natural disasters, diseases and wars are the causal factors for depopulation. Depopulation caused by emigration, on the other hand, is a consequence of economic hardship, which can also be caused by natural phenomena that destabilise the local economy, or by the fluctuations of capitalist markets. This normally occurs in smaller spaces than a national territory, such as rural provinces and urban centres. As the “shrinking cities” of today, emptied because of changes in industrial cycles and globalisation,³¹⁸ Potosí has suffered historically from the decline of its mining production, either because the market has become unfavourable or because reserves were exhausted and only a new technological cycle could enable the exploitation to recommence.

As seen in the testimony of Elias, the limits of the mining cycles are very clear for *potosinos*. The agenda of industrialisation appears as a response to the gloomy prospect of becoming a ghost city once the resources are finished. Elias states that they want to “remain” in Potosí; they do not want to emigrate elsewhere. Their presence is crucial because they are the carriers of the city’s memory; they fight against its fading: “We only say that the government should respond to Potosí’s request, for justice, dignity and honesty (...). Potosí has given everything, people should not forget it”, claims Jhonny Llally.³¹⁹ In similar lines, Gregorio Flores accuses the national governments of trying to erase the department, by favouring Oruro in the industrialisation process: “Now with regards to the cement plant, the government wants it to be together with Oruro. Oruro doesn’t have natural resources. So the government, and all the governments [before it], wants Potosí to disappear. And this the *potosino* people didn’t want”.³²⁰ In these narratives of the past, the main element that should be remembered is the looting of natural resources: “Potosí has a tremendous history. So, the slogans that in that moment were said, [since we were] becoming conscious of it, is that Potosi has been pillaged permanently and until this moment it continues to be pillaged”.³²¹ The fear of total depopulation

³¹⁸ A recent research project funded by Germany’s Federal Cultural Foundation compared some of these “shrinking cities” in the world: Detroit (US), Leipzig/Halle and the Ruhr Valley (Germany), Manchester/Liverpool (UK), Ivanovo (Russia), Hakodate (Japan). For more details, see: <<http://www.shrinkingcities.com>>.

³¹⁹ Interview on 9 September 2013.

³²⁰ Interview on 12 September 2013.

³²¹ Jorge Solares, interview on 11 September 2013.

is, thus, a logical consequence of the daily experience of emptiness brought by the mining exploitation.

This everyday experience of the city is understood as a withering. In 1928, the *potosino* writer Carlos Medinaceli wrote a short story in which he narrates a day in the department's *prefecto*. In the morning, his doorman tells him that "the city is quiet, but sad and afflicted", and the statement follows him throughout the day, while he receives different visitors to his office. Those were times of economic and political crisis, tin prices were declining and people were unhappy. At last, the *prefecto* writes to the president, asking for more funds and a military band. The epigraph of the story is: "The *potosino* tale forgotten by Omiste", in which Medinaceli criticises the flaunting accounts of the city's past in local literary tradition that do not express its daily decadence (Medinaceli, 1955, pp. 46–52). This romanticised literary tradition, represented mainly by Modesto Omiste, was directly informed by the work of Arzáns and will be further explored later in this chapter.

Religious sacrifice and hunger strike

A third way in which the memory of the colonial Imperial City of Charles V was recalled during the 19 days of mobilisation was through the population's demonstration of religious sacrifice, mainly through the tactic of hunger strike. Arzáns was not the only one to believe that the city's fortune depended on God's will; its inhabitants were also worried enough to show their religious devotion when danger lurked outside. He narrates the most impressive scenes of collective religious penitence, such as the eight days of processions that happened after the news of the Lima earthquake in 1687:

Between these two roles walked a number of men of various stations of life, with covered faces and performing harsh and bizarre acts of penitence: some lashing themselves with savage whips; others wounding themselves with metal-tipped scourges; some whose bodies were tightly wrapped in ropes of straw and bristle; many dragging terribly heavy chains, barefoot, and lashing themselves cruelly; others with their arms extended in the form of a cross and tied to a heavy beam borne on the nape of their necks; and others walking with their hands tied behind their backs, gags in their mouths, and prickly haircloth on their bodies, with ropes around their necks pulled by Negroes and other low people (Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, 1975, p. 180).³²²

Even though *potosinos* do not display such extremes of religious devotion today, religiosity still plays a crucial role in people's lives. One of the main features of this religiosity is

³²² That "negroes" are described as "low people" contextualises the limitations of Arzáns' perspective of the new society envisaged against Spanish tyranny, as identified by some scholars (García Pabón, 1998, p. 55; Ruiz, 2003, p. 29).

its organisation around the parishes, the churches that appeared during colonial times which were assigned to specific Spanish or indigenous groups. Virginia Ruiz notes that, in colonial times, the relationship of the city's inhabitants with the images of saints in the parishes, in particular the miraculous Virgins, was concrete and specific. While people feared God's wrath in a more abstract way, they "negotiated" miracles and favours with more accessible entities, such as the images seen in churches (Ruiz, 2003, p. 25). Today, the parishes are central spaces for organising the neighbourhood's life, even during political mobilisations such as the 19 days in 2010. Vladimir Cruz identifies a "historical tradition", in which the "political struggles in Potosí have always been related to the religious theme". He remembers that in 2010 a local parish organised a procession in which people "walked around with a saint 'requesting' that God make Evo Morales listen [to the *potosinos*]." ³²³ An elder protester, Blanca Iglesias, told the local press on 9 August 2010: "we need to take in procession the [image of] Señor de la Veracruz. He is miraculous. No one can stand against him, not even Evo" (El Potosí, 2010j). On 15 August, while civic leaders were negotiating with the government in Sucre, all Catholic temples held masses to ask for peace and for a greater "sensitivity" from the national authorities (El Potosí, 2010p).

The massive hunger strike of 2010 is an even clearer example of this sort of religious devotion, which includes suffering as an important element of collective mobilisation. As a social mobilisation tactic in Bolivia, it also has religious origins and is related to the struggle for democracy and against the military dictatorship at the end of the 1970s. In 1977, four wives of exiled and imprisoned miners started a hunger strike with the support of the local archbishopric in La Paz, against the political persecution of miners and the militarisation of the mines by the dictatorship of Hugo Bánzer. Within a couple of weeks and with the inadvertent help of the government, who reacted violently against the women and their children, the hunger strike spread to the whole country, with more than 1,000 participating in it in the main cities of Bolivia. With increasing popular pressure, the government was forced to negotiate with the strikers, declaring full political amnesty for them (Dunkerley, 1984, pp. 240–241). As seen in the previous chapter, Bánzer was already debilitated by international issues, such as the failure of the seacoast negotiation with Chile, but this strike was, according to Dunkerley, "the single most important factor in bringing the *banzerato* to an end" (1984, p. 241).

In Potosí, a group of miner women participated in the hunger strike in the 1970s, inside San Martín church. This is a neighbourhood with a "miner tradition" described by Vladimir Cruz, where, in 2010, the ex-miner women promoted the hunger strike with younger local activists, with a picket in exactly the same church.

³²³ Interview on 13 September 2013.

With the hunger strike in 2010, *potosinos* were attempting to replicate the success of the 1970s. They did not succeed in creating nationwide solidarity, with the exception of the existing political opposition to Evo Morales, whose support was rejected by COMCIPO's leaders because of its right-wing leanings, and the *potosinos* inhabiting other departments, who also entered the hunger strike (in smaller numbers). Nevertheless, the impressive strength of the strike at the local level, with more than 2,000 participants, is evidence that the regional movement managed to promote widespread engagement.

Some activists explain this massive hunger strike as a direct consequence of the lack of food caused by the blockades: "Many *potosinos* began the hunger strike because, as someone told me, we didn't have anything to eat. So, it was better to go out. Many people put up a tent at the front door of their houses and they went on hunger strike there", recalls Celestino Condori.³²⁴ However, instead of being a straightforward explanation of the strikes, this reasoning makes one question the character of the blockades themselves. In Potosí, they were the opposite of those promoted by the Aymara peasants around La Paz, since they came from the city itself. Even with the initial help of the *coromeños*, the city would never be completely isolated from the country without the support of many other local and urban sectors. Thus, these "self-blockades" were much more similar in character to the hunger strike than to the traditional peasant blockades. The hunger strike was just a clearer expression of the self-sacrificial logic that marked the whole mobilisation from the beginning. According to Jorge Solares, the strike was the result of a failure of other methods of pressure, which had not succeeded in establishing a favourable dialogue with the government in the first week of mobilisation:

As we saw that the government was not meeting [the demands], the other measure was already defensive. Since there was no answer, we did not manage anything, it's better to die. We have to start the hunger strike. It was not the advisory council that told people to start the strike, it was the popular conscience. What we saw was that no one forced the other. You, as a rank-and-file activist, start the hunger strike. So, it was not a conventional hunger strike in the institutions, it was a public hunger strike. People settled tents in squares, streets, they brought their mattresses and started to strike. We see it as a defensive strike, it's intended to reach the heart, in this case, of the government.³²⁵

Adolfo Vara, a student activist during 2010, remembers that one of the most emotional images of the mobilisation was of elders that joined the hunger strike and were filmed by local television programmes:

³²⁴ Interview on 10 September 2013. Benigno Castillo and Francisco Portillo also express similar views.

³²⁵ Interview on 11 September 2013.

I always remember these old people [*viejitos*], they spoke on the radios, on the television: ‘We are going to be on hunger strike, because we don’t have anything, we’re old people, we’re 80 years old. We’ve always wanted Potosí to move forward, but it was never possible. So, we’re on hunger strike until we die’, they said. This marked us deeply. (...) It was on the TV and after that the hunger strike pickets started.³²⁶

The hunger strike of this group of elders was also described by other activists as one of the most sensitive moments of the whole mobilisation.³²⁷ In general, the strike was evidence of a deep emotional commitment to the department, with its roots in the religious imaginary of sacrifice and dedication. This kind of relationship with the struggle had also been identified in other regions, such as Omasuyos and El Alto, mainly in the women’s movement (with those of peasant and miner backgrounds) as seen in the previous chapters. In Potosí, this relationship with struggle was widespread and was backed by the particular tradition of the city’s religious life, marked by rituals of sacrifice – fasting, processions, self-whipping, etc. Even though most strikers were not directly showing their devotion to God, they mirrored the usual perception of power imbalance that believers had in relation to God, begging for his piety. In this case, hunger strikers were appealing to the government’s sensitivity, either because they were still politically attached to it or because they felt it was above their capacities to confront it directly.

City of chroniclers

Colonial times in the Imperial City of Potosí have fascinated historians and chroniclers ever since the Cerro Rico started to be exploited by the Spanish. “For almost 400 years, the loyal *potosinos*, and others too, composed poems, novels, tragedies, and stories of the disorderly and romantic past of this silver mount standing high up in the Andes”, writes Lewis Hanke (1965, p. xxx), who, together with Gunnar Mendoza, spent many years digging out these works to make them available to a wider public. In 1638, around the time Antonio de León Pinelo calculated the famous imaginary silver bridge from Potosí to Spain (1959, p. 65), fantastic new stories about Potosí appeared in the *Corónica Moralizada del Orden de San Augustin en el Perú* written by Fray Antonio de la Calancha. He informs the reader of the miracle of San Nicolás de Toletino in 1598, when the first child that was born in the city managed to survive its first years. “Doctor Don Nicolás Flores, this was the first Creole of Potosí from all that were born there in fifty-three

³²⁶ Interview on 25 September 2013.

³²⁷ Jhonny Lally (interview on 9 September 2013), Francisco Portillo (interview on 13 September 2013) and Emilio Elias (interview on 25 September 2013).

years”, celebrates Calancha, also explaining that the so-called miracle made the name “Nicolás” a very popular one among the Creole population (Calancha, 1638, p. 750).

It was the enduring crisis in the city of Potosí from the late seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth century that gave rise to the greatest chronicler of the city, Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela. During his life, Arzáns wrote two main books: *Anales de la Villa Imperial de Potosí* in 1702, an annual description of the events that happened in the city; and *Historia de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, his major work, in which the author explores the topics that were only sketched in the *Anales* in more than thirteen books, divided into two parts. The *Historia* was left unfinished when he died in 1736. None of the works were published until the late nineteenth century, but some copies of the manuscript were circulated among scholars in Potosí and elsewhere (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, pp. xxxviii–xlvi). Gunnar Mendoza notes that Arzáns expresses both nostalgia for past wealth and praise for the current “virtues” of Potosí brought about by poverty: “O great Potosí, how many laurels do you merit for the exchange you have done? Lucky cliff was yours because for it you have risen to the point of using your strength in the service of God and his saints” (Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, 1965b, p. 322).

Arzáns was influenced by both Spanish and Creole authors. It is possible to see in his prose echoes of writers from the Spanish golden century, such as Cervantes, Lope Vega, Calderón de la Barca and Quevedo (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. xcvi). From native authors, Calancha appears as a key reference, and Arzáns re-works his story of the birth of the first *potosino* under the auspices of San Nicolás (1965a, p. 192). His style is very similar to that of Calancha, as noted by Mendoza (1965, p. xcix), but his interests were much broader: in telling the history of the city, stories of its daily life and of the unbelievable, of love, revenge, wealth, treachery, and violence. “More than historiographic systematisation one finds in Arzáns the sense of pilgrimage, of the conflict, of the dramatic, and at the same time, the sense of pettiness, of triviality, of routine. [He has] a supreme talent that narrates both what is imagined and what is seen”, comments Mendoza (1965, p. xcvi). Even though these extremes are not expressed in a baroque literary style, since Arzáns wrote simple and direct prose (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. ci), they are evidence of baroque themes. When comparing Calancha and Arzáns, Leonardo García Pabón states that the latter has a more ambiguous view on human nature and incorporates in his prose themes such as love and duality (1998, p. 27). Extremes also appeared in the description of the city’s destiny itself: on one hand, the silver mountain provided its inhabitants huge wealth; on the other, the cost of its exploitation was the immense suffering of the Indians, the only people considered able to work inside the mines.

This powerful baroque combination of irreconcilable extremes is what gives Arzáns’ work long-lasting and dramatic effect. Through his narration, he created the myth of the

Imperial City of Potosí, in which all sorts of marvels, disasters and grotesque experiences could happen. Some have called Arzáns' work a "machine of stories", since so many later authors have copied and used his work for literary purposes (Souza, 2013; Vignale, n.d.), others have identified in Arzáns the possibility to imagine a "Creole nation", laying the conditions for the emergence, later, of a Bolivian national subjectivity (García Pabón, 1998, p. 55).

The emergent romanticism of the nineteenth century had in Arzáns a central reference, mainly through the work of traditionalists. The Peruvian Ricardo Palma, the "most conspicuous of these successors", recovered many of Arzáns' tales as inspiration for his own work (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. cxxvi). Also heavily influenced by romanticism, the Argentinian Vicente G. Quesada published his *Crónicas Potosinas* (Chronicles of Potosí) in 1890, with the subtitle, "Customs of the Spanish American Medieval Age" (Quesada, 1890a, 1890b). He also used many of the stories narrated by Arzáns, such as the discovery of the city by Hualpa and the flood caused by the failure of the Caricari dam in 1621. Among Bolivian writers, Julio Lucas Jaimes published many traditions and legends, also based on Arzáns, at the end of the nineteenth century (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. cxxii).³²⁸

Perhaps the most famous of the Bolivian intellectuals to have used the work of Arzáns was the *potosino* Modesto Omiste. In his also-named *Crónicas Potosinas*, published between 1893 and 1896 for the first time and re-edited another three times during the twentieth century, he collected the works of previous traditionalists, such as Palma, Quesada and Lucas Jaimes (Omiste, 1992a, 1992b). Besides being a historian, Omiste was the founder of a local newspaper, *El Tiempo*, and a politician involved in many pedagogical initiatives to promote popular education in Potosí and in Bolivia (Araujo Subieta, 1990, pp. 53–57). His *Crónicas* were essential for the popularisation of the colonial tales of Potosí as written by traditionalists, as noted by Mendoza: "while recompiling this material, the majority of which was published in newspapers of the time, Omiste did a positive service to the researchers, avoiding its definitive loss" (1965, p. cxxv). They are one of the most accessible books in Potosí, used as school textbooks, and the most popularised version of Arzáns's work. Absi notes that it is common to see copies of Omiste's work in many households of miner families today (Absi, 2005, p. 75).

Despite the immense influence of Arzáns, none of the traditionalists encouraged the publication of Arzáns' work, which remained accessible only through manuscripts until 1872, when Vicente de Ballivian y Roxas included the *Anales* in his *Archivo Boliviano* (1872), published in Paris. Curiously, the *Archivo* only contained two documents: the *Anales* and the diary of the

³²⁸ Mendoza provides an extensive and detailed list, including the names of stories and episodes, of Arzáns' influence on the literary work of Palma, Quesada, Lucas Jaimes and many others. See Hanke & Mendoza (1965, pp. cxix–cxxvii).

Sebastián de Seguro on the siege of La Paz in 1781, another piece central to putting together the Bolivian memory puzzle.

Arzáns' *Historia* only became accessible to a broader public from the middle of the twentieth century. In 1925, Luis Subieta Sagárnaga, one of the founders of the Society of Geography and History of Potosí, published a couple of chapters of the first book, but was unable to find funding to publish the rest of the manuscript (Araujo Subieta, 1975, pp. 131–135; Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. xliv). Later, between 1943 and 1945, the first 50 chapters of the first book were published in Buenos Aires under the auspices of the Fundación Universitaria Patiño (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. xliv). Finally, Lewis Hanke and Mendoza managed to edit a full version of the manuscript in 1965, which was published by Brown University. They included in this edition an excellent study on Arzáns and his work, which provided very useful information to understand the impact of the work through the generations (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965). The *Anales* were also re-published by the Fondo Nacional de Cultura a couple of years later in Bolivia (1970). In 2000, selected tales of the *Historia* were again published in Bolivia under the title of *Relatos de la Villa Imperial de Potosí*, edited by Leonardo García Pabón (2000). And finally, in 2012, a facsimile version of the complete 1965 edition was published in Bolivia for the first time, by Plural (Souza, 2013).

The publication of Arzáns' work in its original version, without romantic or traditionalist lenses, had an impact on Bolivian literature of the twentieth century. One of the first novels directly influenced by him appeared in the context of the city's fourth centenary, in the 1940s: *Cuando vibraba la entraña de plata* (1948), by José Enrique Viaña. Dedicated to the city of Potosí, the novel covers the period of the first decades of the seventeenth century, during the conflict between *vicuñas* and *vascongados*. Some of the historical characters described by Arzáns are recovered, such as the Creole Nicolás Pablo Ponce de León (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, p. cxxv).

The image of colonial Potosí reappeared a couple of decades later in *Manchay Puytu*, by Nestor Taboada Terán (1977). The author uses Arzáns' depictions of the city and the grotesque environment he builds around religiosity, sexuality, and death (Richards, 1999, pp. 59–78). The Creole perspective brought by Arzáns is combined with the Quechua tale of Manchay Puytu, which tells the story of a man taken by desperation after the death of his beloved, who unearths her body and uses a bone to make a *quena*, a traditional Andean flute. In Taboada Terán's version of the story, the man is a priest with indigenous origins in Potosí, whose story expresses all the disorientations caused by the clash between the Spanish and the Andean cosmovisions during colonial times (Neustadt, 2007).

More recently, the Imperial City was revisited by the novel *Potosí, 1600*, by Ramón Rocha Monroy (2002). Back in the Creole world of Arzáns, where the indigenous are only

secondary characters, Rocha Monroy narrates the story of Nicolás Flores, the first to be born in the city. In a parody of the world depicted by Arzáns, Rocha's characters navigate between the real and the absurd, in which the "doubt" is a central component of the narrative (Murillo, 2007).

The purpose of this section has been to sketch how the memory of the Imperial City of Charles V, the colonial Potosí, was reproduced through time in Bolivia, arriving at the beginning of the twenty-first century energetically, and feeding the imagination of all sorts of *potosinos* during the 19 days of mobilisation in 2010. The work of colonial chroniclers, especially Arzáns, was key to providing a full narrative of this memory, a narrative that in many ways depicted a story of incredible wealth followed by terrible decadence. Even though most contemporary social activists probably have not read Arzáns directly, the world illustrated by his tales is still present in popular imagination today, when the city is defended for its "tremendous history" and because it was once the centre of the world.

In this reproduction of memory, the work of Arzáns was an indirect source of strength, which provided the most different literary schools in Bolivia with a variety of themes. Ignored for more than a century, a lighter version of Arzáns' work was presented by traditionalists in the second half of the nineteenth century, with special emphasis on themes related to love, secret treasures and knightly encounters between the 'nations' that inhabited the city.³²⁹ Over the last fifty years, however, Arzáns' dramatic baroque style, filled with grotesque situations and ambiguities, has been fully recovered by Bolivian authors.

In this sense, the narrative of rise and decay of the city encompasses all its historical moments: after achieving its peak through the exploitation of immense quantities of silver, everything that happened afterwards was decay or only a withered version of the former glorious economic cycle. History only repeated itself from the middle of the seventeenth century on, including almost two centuries of republican life. This self-image of Potosí denies the reality of the Bolivian state, which is only represented by its similarities with the Spanish Crown and its deceitful officials. There are almost no literary depictions of Potosí during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the meaningful exception of the already mentioned short story of Carlos Medinaceli. The two octaves that chase the main character's thoughts, "the city is quiet, but sad and afflicted", express the feeling of permanent frustration that fill *potosinos* with anguish.

Besides oral storytelling and literary representations, other issues have kept this memory alive through the centuries. The colonial past is arguably mirrored in many material

³²⁹ See the comparison that Mendoza makes between Arzáns and Palma (Hanke & Mendoza, 1965, pp. cxvi–cxvii).

experiences *potosinos* have in their everyday lives, starting from the city's map to the continued presence of the Cerro Rico.

Colonial landscape and the Cerro Rico

According to Connerton, the everyday experience of the urban space is a central practice of memorialisation. As with other spaces, the "street" or "an assembly of streets" is a particularly strong device of memory because it provides social relations with a "gestalt", giving them "order and focus" (Connerton, 2009, p. 24). The social encounters that happen in this space are very relevant, because they are the particular experiences that allow these relations to amalgamate into the space in which they occur:

We should never underestimate the importance of street intersections. They act as sorting devices, precipitating encounters, some serependitous, some mildly embarrassing. The life of a city street is formed over time out of many such local contacts. (...) In themselves these may all be trivial events, but the sum total of events of this kind is not trivial. The sum total of local public contacts, most of them fortuitous, none of them implying private commitments, builds a web of public trust (Connerton, 2009, p. 25).

And among all the features of the city experience, it is the urban plan that provides the most enduring characteristics "most resistant to change" (Connerton, 2009, p. 26). Potosí, as well as La Paz, is a perfect example of this endurance, since its plan is still marked by the segregation between Spanish and Indian populations, which later became a division between the middle and professional classes and the mine workers. As noted earlier, despite the recent expansion of the city, the former *rancherías* are still occupied by the miners and are the centre of their social lives. "With its market and small shops of tools for the mining, the main artery that leads to the mine is the heart of the neighbourhoods it crosses" (Absi, 2005, p. 64). Not everything is about "public trust", though, since colonial urbanisation established many borders between the city's inhabitants: miners rarely come to the city centre, which is considered a space of the "city's good society and its golden youth" (Absi, 2005, p. 66).

As seen with the map of Bolivia with its lost territories, maps are far from being objective representations of reality. They are powerful tools to imagine a lost and nostalgic past, creating an uncomfortable self-perception of the present. This happens with the colonial urban plan of Potosí as well. For the celebrations of the fourth centenary of the city, in 1945, one of the measures proposed by the Society of Geography and History of Potosí was the recovering of the old colonial names of streets and squares, in order to promote the "traditions and legends" related to the colonial Imperial City (Caro Martínez, 2011, p. 75). A couple of years later, Viaña published in his novel a hand-drawn map of the Imperial City to support the reader's

imagination. The map displayed the colonial names of the main streets and squares, and the neighbourhoods inhabited by each of the “nations” involved in the gang war (Creole, Andalusians, Basques, Portuguese, Castilians, etc.), identified by different colours (Viaña, 1948). In these depictions, the *Plaza 10 de Noviembre* is called the *Plaza del Regocijo*, where famous festivities took place to honour the Crown and to celebrate the city’s important dates; the *Calle Junín* becomes the *Calle de las Siete Vueltas*, where the taverns frequented by rich miners were located and the *Pasaje Boulevard* is turned into the *Corral de las Comedias*, where theatre groups used to present their plays to the public. Currently, all this information is also available on the tourism website of the municipality.³³⁰



Map 5 – Potosí’s downtown map, with contemporary and colonial names of locations.

Another way in which the memory of the colonial city of Potosí was reproduced in the city’s space was with historical monuments. Buildings and constructions are different from streets and urban spaces because they are more vulnerable to change. Thus, “the desire to memorialise is precipitated by a fear, a threat, of cultural amnesia” (Connerton, 2009, p. 28).

³³⁰ “Potosy, más que historia”: <<http://www.potosy.com.bo>>. The touristic logo of the city, a hand-written “Potosy”, refers to an old orthography of the city’s name.

Even though Arzáns was already denouncing the pillage of churches in his own time, it was only during the 1940s and the preparations for the fourth centenary that the first actions were taken to promote the restoration and protection of important historical buildings of the city. A study by the Society of Geography and History identified key demands regarding urbanisation and public works (Caro Martínez, 2011, p. 69). During the 1940s, the society actively participated in the restoration of the Casa de la Moneda (Prado Ríos, 1994, p. 65).

The efforts of conservation and the promotion of Potosí's historical monuments resulted in the inclusion of the city in the Unesco list of World Heritage Sites in 1987. The protected area includes the historical city centre, with Spanish quarters and the *rancherías*, the ore-grinding mills (*ingenios*) built around the Ribera canal, the dams used to provide water for refining activities, and the Cerro Rico itself, clearly establishing the reforms carried out by Toledo as the city's main heritage reference (Unesco, 2015). After the recognition by Unesco, some other conservation initiatives were undertaken, such as renovations of the façades in the Calle Ayacucho, the Omiste Theatre (former Templo de los Betlemitas) and the nave of the Compañía de Jesús Church, which occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s (Prado Ríos, 1994). Many historical buildings were renovated during recent decades and much emphasis was placed on providing them with their "original" colonial colours, such as indigo and a brownish orange pigment taken from the Cerro Rico, with doors and wooden balconies painted in green. These colours replaced the republican fashion of white houses and brown doors and balconies (La Razón, 2003).

One of the most important monuments of Potosí listed by the Unesco, the Cerro Rico, was a central topic during the 2010 mobilisations. Its preservation was among the six demands made to the national government and created internal disputes during the mobilisation. In June 2010, a month before the civic strike started, a local deputy denounced a new collapse in the mountain, which had created a hole 30 meters in diameter and 10 meters deep (El Potosí, 2010a). A year earlier, the national newspaper *Cambio* had published a special story on the Cerro Rico, stating that it had already lost around 200 meters in height because of the centuries of uninterrupted mining activity (Cambio, 2009). Thus, there was a general perception that the mountain, which continually appeared to be sinking, could collapse at any moment. On the other hand, the cooperative miners working inside the mountain were opposed to any measure of preservation that could include its evacuation, stating in the local press that they would mobilise against any authority that demand such a thing (Bullaín Iñiguez, 2010). Later, they joined the strike, claiming a sense of departmental civic duty.³³¹ Effective measures to protect the

³³¹ Guillermo Condori says "But doing the proper analysis, we have definitely had to bend over for the interests of the department. For this reason, we have come, because there is no alternative" (interview

mountain's structure are lacking up to today and in 2014, Unesco included Potosí in its list of endangered heritage sites (Unesco, 2015).



Figure 4 – Potosí's downtown with the Cerro Rico at the background. Building on the left renovated according to colonial style.

Besides being a discussion between economic models and their respective risks – keep the mining activity and risk collapse or stop it and promote tourism but risk an economic depression - the perception of the mountain and what to do with it also entails a dispute between two ways of dealing with memory. On the one hand, the sectors that favoured an evacuation thought that the mountain should be kept as a relic, as a monument of the past:

Now about the Cerro Rico, I'd like people to take note. The Cerro Rico is falling down – it has already been filled with car tires. Whatever the government says, it does nothing. They keep making the mountain work [*siguen haciendo trabajar la montaña*]. Tomorrow or the day after, the Cerro Rico might crumble and will disappear. We must keep this as a relic, because Potosí is our very own tourist attraction. If it crumbles, we'll no longer have a single... Nothing for tourism, we'll have nothing, all will die.³³²

The expression used here, “they keep making the mountain work”, is particularly important, because through the memorialisation of it, people would finally give the mountain,

on 7 November 2013). According to *El Potosí*, the cooperative miners decided to join the mobilisation in an assembly on 31 July 2010 (El Potosí, 2010d).

³³² Anonymous 11, interview on 25 September 2013.

understood as a living being, some rest. On the other hand, cooperative miners argue that the mountain should be kept productive and “alive”. “If you imagine, it’s already 500 years of work, and it can stand some more, if we take care of it (...). We cannot apply high technology, because it’s a historic monument”, says Guillermo Condori.³³³ Behind this idea of “taking care” of the mountain to keep it productive lies a very common understanding of mining as parallel to agriculture, starting from the identification of the Cerro Rico with the Pachamama, the deity that corresponds to Mother Earth and is the source of fertility. In Potosí and elsewhere in the Andes, there is a shared belief that when people let the mountain rest or offer libations to exhausted reserves, the metal will “grow” again (Absi, 2005, p. 90; Harris, 2000, p. 66). Absi notes that this idea is fed by the fact that the mountain has survived many economic cycles, with new reserves being explored when the market changed its preferences and new technologies emerged (2005, p. 90). The work inside the mine is an extremely ritualised activity, in which the *acullicu* and the cult of the forces related to the mine, the Pachamama, el *tío*, the protecting saints and virgins, create bonds between the current miners and the generations of miners who were doing the same activities during past centuries.³³⁴

The miners use their interpretation of the colonial past, particularly of the Spanish adventurer and the *mitayo* experiences, to make sense of the daily situations related to their work. In her ethnographic study among the cooperative miners in Potosí in the 1990s, Absi shows that negative characteristics normally attributed to the miners - alcoholism, womanising, violence and greed – are explained by Spanish blood and heritage, in an imaginary fed by Árzans’ stories on the many sins committed by *potosinos* during colonial times (Absi, 2005, pp. 69–75). On the other hand, the image of the *mitayos* and their terrible working conditions is the “historical matrix” of the miners’ discourse on the sacrifices made inside the mine. They claim that the *mitayos* were locked inside the mine for a whole year and went blind when leaving the mountain. Miners today pay their homage to those who have died inside the mine, who are remembered during the anniversaries of the cooperative sections, and understand silicosis, a common disease among them, as a symbol of this sacrifice (Absi, 2005, p. 90).

The memory of colonial Potosí, the Imperial City of Charles V, can be projected in the many daily activities that *potosinos*, and in particular, the miners, experience. It provides them

³³³ Interview on 7 November 2013.

³³⁴ *Acullicu* is the practice of chewing coca leaves, making a ball that is held in the cheek. A miner has a *pijchu* (the coca ball) in his mouth during all his working time, renewing it twice (Absi, 2005, p. 53). The *tío* is a *supay*, a sort of devil, and is one of the most important deities of the mine. In contrast with the Pachamama, who has a more generative function, the *tío* is understood as a “*patrón*” of the mine, who organises the distribution of the minerals through different veins. Miners make many offerings to him in order to get his favours (Absi, 2005, p. 99). Almost every section of the mine also has a saint or virgin with protective functions (Absi, 2005, p. 93).

with a narrative of an era of grandeur followed by almost uninterrupted decadence. Today, there is a pervasive sense that the Bolivian state is the inheritor of that unfair Spanish rule, only interested in plundering resources, leaving ashes behind. Curiously, this perception does not make *potosinos* less Bolivian. Despite their regionalism, most social sectors are intimately attached to national political movements and debates. In fact, *potosinos* have provided Bolivia with one of the most dramatic stories of the pillage of natural resources, a story that is definitely part of the national imaginary. Other Bolivians also follow *potosinos* when they discuss the possibilities of Bolivia becoming a nation, identifying threats and concerns that the younger generation is leaving the country for Argentina, Spain, Brazil or the United States.³³⁵ In this regard, even the miners' obsession in keeping the Cerro Rico productive, has some parallels with national projects: Bolivians want to industrialise the country to guarantee it is still feasible after or despite the plunder. It is a struggle to keep the city, the nation and their memory alive.

³³⁵ Alcides Arguedas's *Pueblo Enfermo* (2008), published in 1909, is a major expression of this anxiety regarding the (im)possibility of having a Bolivian nation. The territorial losses suffered during the republican period also contributed to the diagnostic of a country that was unable to defend its fundamental premises for unification. Felipa Catacora, a neighbourhood leader in El Alto, emphasised the need to have local jobs to avoid the emigration of professionals (interview on 25 March 2013).

CHAPTER EIGHT - CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, we narrated the experience of Andean New Year in Achacachi. Aymara peasant leaders in Omasuyos established an almost sacred relationship with the hill at Q'alachaqa, even though the most important events related to the place had only occurred a couple of years earlier. The ease with which the appeal to ancient traditions was mixed with the immediate political context – such as the government of Evo Morales – was astonishing, particularly because this reframing of history appeared as something that was actually constitutive of these actors, rather than an artificial political invention.

The cases studied by this research have highlighted the central role played by the past in contemporary Bolivian social movements. Their political actions required memories in order to restate their legitimacy not only in the national arena but also among themselves. Even recognising that all political projects generally rely on history, the intensity of this return to the past might be affected by a Bolivian particularity. Political debates within the left often appear as a function of the past, as if collective actions that are raised today are only ways of correcting past injustices.

This insistent reference to the past has already been noted by scholars studying the country. Some have seen in the Aymara words for future and past, *qhepha* and *nayra*, possible explanations of a different perception of temporality, compared to Western positions. *Qhepha*, the word that depicts the future, also means something that is behind, invisible; while *nayra*, which stands for the past, also means eye and, therefore, something visible (Canessa, 2012b, p. 32; Farthing & Kohl, 2013, p. 365). Hylton and Thomson have emphasised the Aymara expression “to walk ahead while looking back” (*qhip nayr uñtasis sartañani*) as evidence for this pervasive perception of temporality that takes lessons from lived experiences to deal with an unforeseeable future (Hylton & Thomson, 2007, p. 149).

These depictions of Aymara perceptions of time and history provide us with important clues to understanding the dynamics between memory and struggle in Bolivia but offer little explanation for the mechanisms behind this constant recovery of the past. The main objective of this thesis was to understand how and why the recalling of past events became important in contemporary processes of social mobilisation. Thus, the primary focus was neither the activists, the regions, the struggles, nor the memories alone. To investigate their intersection, detailed attention was paid, on one hand, to the development of these memories through time and their past interactions with Bolivian political life, and, on the other, to the actors and how these stories of the past might be embedded in their political projects and everyday lives.

Before presenting some final remarks, the first section of this final chapter is a recapitulation of the content of the thesis, detailing how each of its case studies dealt with the problem stated above. The second section will cover the specific information gathered here on the projects of the future presented by the activists from Omasuyos, El Alto and Potosí, since, although the main focus of the thesis was not to analyse Bolivian struggles, this discussion might be useful for scholars of Bolivian social movements and deserves some final comments. The third and most relevant section will focus on the main topic of the research and will identify the characteristics that assisted the memories studied here to become powerful platforms to express contemporary demands and constraints during the struggles: a depiction of imbalance, significant previous political junctures that shaped their interpretation, an easy projection into familiar spaces, and the presence of corporal metaphors. Then, the relative absence of the memories of other events, such as the Chaco War and the 1952 revolution, will be assessed once more. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the main contributions this thesis is able to offer to social movement theory and to memory studies, identifying that memories play a fundamental structuring role during the chaotic moments of insurgency.

The thesis in retrospect

In Chapter One of this thesis, we presented a theoretical pathway to understand the interplay between memory and social struggle presented by contemporary Bolivian activists. Theories of new social movements placed importance on the identities held by the actors, while their Marxist critics also emphasised the roles played by economy and the immediate historical formation of the group in relation to the state. Theories of resource-mobilisation focused on the conscious action of the movements' leaders, who were seen as strategists making use of a variety of tools, which included narratives of the past, to foster successful mobilisation. In this context, stories appeared as an important tool, not only to enhance participation but also to make sense of new situations brought about by the struggle itself.

A criticism made of these perceptions came from the field of memory studies, since all of them treated "culture" as a something frozen in time, either as an "identity" or as a "resource". According to Halbwachs' pioneering work, the most basic assumption of collective memory - the characteristic that distinguishes it from history as a scholarly field - is its relationship with the present needs of the groups who are remembering. This presentist approach was later criticised because it denies the cumulative effects of memories, threatening the idea of historical continuity altogether if taken to its last consequences. Thus, we presented a processual approach, which paid detailed attention to each point of recollection that carries

its own interplay between past and present, and poses the conditions for the next one. However, this approach was not very helpful when analysing discontinuous memories. An everyday approach to memory, which places emphasis on how people relate events of the past to habits, celebrations, representations of space and journeys unfolding in specific geographic circuits, was also presented.

Besides the discussion on the temporality of memory, another theoretical approach was presented: cultural studies' focus on the difficulty and the duty to remember certain traumatic events. This literature emphasised the importance of the politics of memory in creating more ethical and responsible societies, and offered an important tool to understand how to conjugate social movements theory and memory studies: the idea that certain memories of past events, as exemplary memories, can serve as platforms for new contents and struggles.

This theoretical "pathway" was sketched out in order to answer the shortcomings of the actual literature dealing with memory and social struggle in contemporary Bolivia, since it tends to either identify memory as a latent expression of the social contradictions of the past or to consider important sociological events as occurrences that will necessarily be remembered by the following generations. More than the simple long-standing presence of the past, or a dialectic of the past and the present, it was important to identify how certain memories became important to social activists and why they were so.

The cases studied here were first presented according to a more standard assessment of the struggles, with a description of the mobilisation, the immediate economic situation of the region, the main political objectives pursued by the activists, their identities, and a historical overview of their social formation in relation to the Bolivian state. These first chapters (Chapters Two, Four and Six) corresponded roughly to theories of new social movements and their Marxist critiques, which call for more historically contextualised analysis. Second, we focused on the narratives of the past presented by the activists: how these stories related to their immediate petitions, playing the role of platforms; which central messages they conveyed that could be traced in the present; how activists first learnt about them; how they were reproduced through time; and how they were present in people's everyday lives. These second chapters (Chapters Three, Five and Seven) corresponded to the literature that emphasises the role of stories in fostering collective action, the presentist memory approach (how memories are subjugated to the present), the processual approach (attention to the reproduction of these narratives through time) and the everyday approach.

In Chapter Two, the case of the struggle of Aymara peasants in the province of Omasuyos is discussed. After a brief account of how their mobilisation demanding compliance by the government with an agreement of 70 topics unfolded into the Gas War, the province's

economic situation was presented: by the time the mobilisation started, 97% of its population was poor and the gross value of highland peasant production had experienced a dramatic decrease since the 1980s. Aymara peasant activists, thus, perceived a striking imbalance between city and countryside and this reflected in their political project for an indigenous and popular Bolivia, the Qullasuyo Marka. The history of political activism in the region revealed that, different from standard depictions of Aymaras, people from Omasuyos had a long-standing engagement with the state, and particularly with the city of La Paz, the seat of government. Their identity, as *ponchos rojos*, perceived as a vanguard standing for “true Bolivians”, showed us not only the strength of their ethnicity but also their left-wing political identity.

Their recalling of Tupac Katari as symbol for their struggle was then analysed in Chapter Three. The story of the hero and his partner, Bartolina Sisa, conveyed messages that supported an indigenous government in the country and exemplified the suffering and dedication of the activist life, particularly among women. The strength of the memory of Katari was difficult to explain only by the processual approach, since references to it were almost erased from the registers of indigenous struggles until the twentieth century. Despite some evidence of oral storytelling, the full recovery of his memory was only possible after the political workshops promoted by peasant unions during the 1970s and 1980s. The story, however, contained many characteristics that allowed it to take root among Aymara peasantry: through the image of the siege, it radically depicted the inversion of power between city and countryside and highlighted the vital importance of the people of Omasuyos as food producers who had the power to let the *q’ara* population starve.

Chapter Four depicted the struggle in El Alto, which followed that of Omasuyos chronologically. The events in the city unfolded quickly, mainly because of the government’s violence that killed around 60 activists over a couple of weeks. In 2003, the economic situation of El Alto, a city marked by its informal economy, was also particularly harsh and the number of workers in an extremely precarious situation had increased drastically since the end of the 1980s. Neoliberal policies, on the other hand, had the effect of further empowering local organisations, such as the *juntas* and the market associations, which had already been playing a vital role in community life since the first waves of migrants began to arrive in city right after the 1952 revolution. As migrants from all corners of Bolivia, activists in El Alto shared many identities: indigenous, miner, and *cholo*. The *cholo* represents a liminal experience who links the countryside with the urban space and is normally engaged in activities such as transport and commerce. In 2003, activists in El Alto also considered themselves a vanguard of Bolivia, focusing on a project of industrialisation and development.

Chapter Five focused on how the War of the Pacific provided a main narrative to express the petition for the nationalisation of gas, the ultimate demand of October 2003. The idea of recovering the seacoast, a resource that was perceived as having been stolen by deceitful Chileans, was easily applied to gas, an equally precious resource, stolen by equally deceitful transnational companies. The rumours that undercover Chileans were giving orders to the Bolivian army also helped to create a clear image of the enemy during the demonstrations, detaching the popular rank-and-file soldiers from the high ranks who acted in foreign interests. The pervasive presence of the memory of the War of the Pacific in Bolivians' everyday lives – through schooling, at parades, on maps, in mass media – was then presented. Differently to what happened with the memory of Tupac Katari, remembering the lost seacoast has been a continuous activity in Bolivian public life since the war finished. A processual analysis of the interaction of this memory with the country's political history indicated that, even though it has always been part of the official nationalism, it has worked more as a tool of political destabilisation than as an argument for state legitimisation.

The 19 days of civic strike in the city of Potosí were the main topic of Chapter Six. They occurred seven years after the Gas War and in a very different context. *Potosinos* were by then experiencing a short-term economic bonanza (thanks to the high prices of minerals), which had not, however, translated into better living conditions in the least developed of the nine Bolivian departments. The history of the city showed the dramatic impact of mining economic cycles, which had caused intense depopulation and economic depression on many occasions. Marked by the overwhelming presence of its Cerro Rico, *potosino* identity was predominantly miner-based but also reflected a tense relationship with its indigenous and peasant roots. The perception of an unjust distribution of national resources that did not return from local extractive mining to the department resources triggered the demand for a “federal Potosí”, which translated into a will to manage their natural resources by themselves.

Chapter Seven investigated how narratives of the rise and fall of colonial Potosí during the first economic cycle of silver were deeply embedded in the popular imagination during the 19 days. *Potosinos* repeatedly talked about the former grandeur of their city and how, after resources were exhausted, the city almost became an abandoned mining camp (*campamento minero*). The struggle to remember the glorious past was then combined with the will to promote a viable and productive future, with an industrial development that would counteract the dependency on extractive activities. The work of the eighteenth-century chronicler, Bartolomé Arzáns de Orsúa y Vela, was identified as the source of these narratives of opulence and decadence, stories that are reflected in the city's landscape today, through the recuperation of old colonial street names, the preservation and restoration of historical buildings and the

continued presence of the Cerro Rico as a *locus* that reproduces mining as an activity as ritualised as agriculture in the Andes.

Projects of the future

In this study, the future has been mostly depicted through a left-wing perspective on industrial development, as a tributary of dependency theory. The main task of peripheral countries, according such a perspective, is to “catch-up” with industrialised nations, while the state appears as a major actor to bring about this change. Social activists in El Alto and Potosí presented this project more clearly, emphasising the need to retain resources locally and to develop the national (or regional) economy by building plants and processing raw materials. In both cases, industrialisation appears as a logical alternative to the unavoidable exhaustion of natural resources, whether natural gas or minerals, and to the consequent economic crises and poverty. With employment not fully recovered from the dismissal of thousands of state miners under Decree 21060, securing jobs is one of the main objectives of such a project, particularly in the city of Potosí, where people have placed much hope in attempts, unsuccessful to the present day, to build metal processing plants such as Karachipampa.

In the Omasuyos case, this project appeared more nuanced, since rural development does not imply industrialisation. People asked for roads, tractors and irrigation, but also for more agrarian reform, government credits and social services, such as schools, universities, health centres and a social security scheme. There was obviously an emphasis on modernisation in the 70-topic agreement but it was much more related to the immediate improvement of life conditions for the indigenous and peasant population than to changing the economic model of the country. There was a call for more welfare, in which Aymara peasants demanded the same rights and facilities enjoyed by people in the city. The *alteño* appeal for the provision of basic needs (electricity, water, schools, health) also mirrors this petition, in which the state appears as a partner that funds local initiatives to be carried out by empowered local organisations, such as the *juntas vecinales* or local communities. This developmental thinking entails both an expansion of “the focus on economic growth with more social considerations” (Carballo, 2014) and a neoliberal emphasis, “which seeks to minimize the state” by empowering local organisations (Lazar, 2008, p. 70). The immediate context of such bargaining with the state for services is the Law of Popular Participation and the Law of Administrative Decentralisation, passed in the 1990s, which created the base territorial organisations (OTBs) as a way to share state responsibility with collective groups, as seen more clearly in the case of El Alto.

A common feature of the three cases studied is their left-wing leanings, which are expressed by both the more developmentalist and state-centred perspective and the more recent stress on local organisations. These characteristics are also shared by Evo Morales' party, MAS, which grew from the coca growers unions in the Chapare region and had a strong anti-imperialist and nationalist position. Thus, it is not surprising that Omasuyos, El Alto and Potosí are part of the MAS base of electoral support, and many of their activists consider themselves part of the *proceso de cambio*. They are not, however, the most faithful followers of Morales and criticisms were clearly voiced in Potosí in 2010 and in El Alto and Omasuyos, which have recently elected mayors who are not from MAS.³³⁶

The way actors perceived their identities, be they related to class, ethnicity, ideology, gender or age, played an important role in the mobilisations. Not surprisingly, these categories of identification are related to views of future and past that appeared during the struggle. In Omasuyos, social actors recognise themselves as being both Aymara and peasant and this was key to presenting themselves as representatives of a poor indigenous majority, the true Bolivia, Qullasuyo Marka. In Potosí, the miner heritage is very strong and gives a popular identity to the civic movement as a whole, even when many of their activists are from middle class sectors (students, professionals, teachers, etc.). *Alteños* draw on both indigenous and miner heritages to explain their rebellious character but their liminal position between city and countryside, as *cholo* traders and migrants, guarantees them a special relationship of agency in the national arena. Women and young activists voiced their expectations and projects in a different manner from men and middle-aged adults. In El Alto in particular, women's testimonies were more inclined to uncover ingrained ethnic and gender discrimination and youth emphasised a more spontaneous and radical character of the struggle. Both expressed a sense of great agency – locating themselves as major actors – and a consequent perception of unfairness related to the non-recognition of this protagonism. Again, one of the defining characters of all the groups under study was their recent relationship and, therefore, identification, with left-wing groups. As miners and peasant leaders during the military regimes, they had suffered political persecution and struggled for democracy, participating in parties and aligning themselves clearly within the left-wing pole of Bolivian politics.

It can be affirmed that all of them showed a strong patriotism, projecting national loyalties from local and territorialised political realities. This has been argued by Sian Lazar in the case of El Alto, in which local citizenship practices related to religious festivities and social

³³⁶ In 2010, Constantino Gutiérrez, who was a candidate of the Movimiento por la Soberanía (MPS), won the mayoral elections in Achacachi. In 2015, the candidate from the Unidad Nacional, Soledad Chapetón, won the municipal elections in El Alto, after a corruption scandal involving the previous mayor of MAS.

organisations, such as the neighbourhood councils, defined the actors' relationship with the state. Even the geographic position of El Alto, overlooking the seat of government, gives the local *vecinos* a sense of responsibility regarding national politics, which could be said to translate into their self-definition as 'warriors of the nation'. Besides, the fact that most of the marches arriving in La Paz have to pass through El Alto's streets and neighbourhoods also heightens this sense of responsibility, in which *alteños* align themselves with the marchers vis-à-vis the state. In the case of Omasuyos, for example, one could argue that Qullasuyo Marka could hardly be equivalent to a popular Bolivia, since it excludes important sectors of society, such as the lowlands indigenous groups. Yet many Aymara peasant leaders use the terms interchangeably. The main tensions projected onto Bolivia as a whole, such as the dichotomy between countryside and city, are related to a very intimate relationship with local space, shaped by market experiences and peregrinations between community, provincial town and capital city. These projections of the nation that emanate from the local territory can also be perceived when both Aymara peasants and *alteños* claim a position of vanguard in national politics and place importance on having a president from their own ranks.³³⁷ *Potosinos'* projection of the nation is more complex, given that its regionalism is a product of its peripheral status in national politics. Thus, they establish a clear distinction between Bolivia the nation and the national state and government. As a nation, Bolivia is seen almost as an extended version of Potosí, suffering from the same ills, such as the plundering of natural resources by foreign interests. *Potosinos* are proud to have participated in national wars and processes of social mobilisation. As a state, Bolivia and its bureaucrats are seen as the continuity of the colonial state, whose main interest was to exploit silver, leaving the local population in misery.

Memories at work

In this thesis, we have identified three specific memories of the past that worked as platforms to express the contents of three social struggles in the present. Even though we do not have a generalisability claim, and we do not propose a model with this research, we still can address the issue of whether these memories share any common characteristics that could explain their particular strength, at least in the context that they were inserted. In the next

³³⁷ Roberto Nina regrets the fact that *alteños* were not able to put forward a president from the city, even when stating that the city's objectives were not "political": "(...) sometimes, because of the circumstances, we have to undertake the task [*asumir*]. If only in this moment we had a government, a leader from El Alto... but we were not prepared. So, the actual president appeared and, I believe, he is failing in a couple of things, but he is also meeting some other demands" (interview on 13 May 2013).

sections, we will explore these characteristics, so as to summarise the main findings of this research and to indicate how they might be useful for other researchers.

In search of balance

One of the central features of all of the memory cases was that they contained a narrative of imbalance. They expressed an injustice that was committed in the past and required a reparation in the present so that a balanced situation could be achieved again, identifying a collective actor that was wronged and a clear representation of otherness. These narratives of imbalance had a close correspondence with the injustices perceived in the present, which appeared as main motivations for the struggle.

The story of Tupac Katari was able to express Omasuyos' struggle to overcome the imbalance and to invert power relations between a privileged white urban space, identified with the *q'ara* people, and exploited rural provinces, identified with the Indian communities. Katari's brutal execution was evidence of the cruel character of the *q'aras*. The War of the Pacific symbolised the suffering of Bolivians *vis-à-vis* greedy international aggressors, which condemned the country to underdevelopment. In El Alto, the hydrocarbons were seen as resources that needed to be recovered from imperialist powers as was the seacoast, while national political adversaries were discredited as being *vende-patrias* (traitors to the fatherland) or Chileans. Thus, this recovering was a condition for Bolivia to start building its path towards development. The rise and fall of colonial Potosí symbolised the dramatic aspects of mining economic cycles and the state bureaucrats stand for the greedy and insensitive overlords of a policy of resource exploitation benefitting foreign powers. The petition of "federal Potosí" entailed a demand for the redistribution of resources within the national sphere in which Potosí would receive a greater share than before of the income generated by its mining activities. Thus, national state and colonial state are comparable, since both are promoters of a careless plundering extractivist enterprise that does not bother to create local development. The expression of "outstanding debts" (*cuentas pendientes*) has been used both in El Alto and in Potosí to express the morally questionable behaviour of foreign nations, such as Chile, and the national state.

This correspondence of past and present imbalances can be understood through Halbwachs' contributions and his "presentist approach". According to him, in a hypothetical competition between the constraints of the past and of the present, the only "framework that counts" is the one "constituted by the commandments of our present society and which necessarily excludes all the others" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 50). The past constraints are only

useful, thus, when they are able to serve present ones, in a process in which “the mind reconstructs its memories under the pressure of society” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 51). This reconstruction entails a reformulation of the events themselves, which we identified here as the process of turning experiences of the past into imaginary narrative forms, and which Halbwachs describes as follows:

Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 51).

This interpretation, however, diverts our attention to an important aspect of the narrative character of memories. As argued in the first chapter, when memories serve as rhetorical “platforms”, they actually enable certain different contents to be expressed. Even if we assume that the present plays a preferential role in establishing the main constraints of a society, inherited narratives of the past, because they are frameworks themselves, also inform the way certain constraints are perceived. Thus, an effort was made throughout the thesis to understand how these narratives have evolved through time and what we can learn from it.

The histories of memories

When analysing the memories of Katari, the Pacific and colonial Potosí, we investigated their history, and how these events were interpreted from the moment they occurred until the present. This analysis was inspired by the processual approach, which emphasised the importance of identifying each point of recollection carrying its own interplay between past and present, and their cumulative effect over time.

These memories experienced different histories and presented different grades of continuity. The War of the Pacific could be considered the most continuous of all of them, since the event gained official memorialisation and influenced national political life from the end of the nineteenth century until the present day dispute underway in the Hague. Despite the constant presence of this memory in public life, the contents attached to it changed over time. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the war informed a militaristic ideology that contributed to the Chaco War, while today it expresses more a demand to be achieved through peaceful negotiations and an appeal to international solidarity. Meanwhile, a processual analysis of this memory also shows us that, although the state has incorporated it as a main national symbol, this memory has often proved a powerful tool of oppositional groups to overthrow governments and regimes. One could argue that the reference to the War of the Pacific retains

a cumulative effect of questioning state elites for being unable to recover the resource or having negotiated dissatisfactory terms with Chile.

The memory of colonial Potosí appeared as a more nuanced topic throughout local history. While the stories of grandeur only became truly popular after the works of the traditionalist writers in the second half of the nineteenth century, the city of Potosí has historically been considered a trope for the plunder of natural resources by foreign powers. The “Potosí syndrome”, as Dunkerley names it, has been “at the heart of the ‘paranoid style’ in Bolivian public life” (2007, p. 135). Both narratives of the city, the colonial grandeur and its plunder, leading to its decadence, were first politically mobilised in the 1940s, during the fourth centenary of its foundation and the first federalist petitions of the mayor Walter Dalence. This was a key event to put together a proud regionalist struggle with a memory of plunder and oppression.

The memory of Tupac Katari showed considerable discontinuity, becoming only a truly popular and powerful memory after the Kataristas have embraced him as the symbol of their struggle. Before them, the hero had been mobilised by nationalist rhetoric (a university was named after him after the 1952 revolution), but without becoming a popular reference. Thus, after the 1960s, Katari’s memory became tangled with highland peasant struggles, which depicted his story specifically as a symbol of Indian resistance against the *q’ara* and townspeople, instead of a more domesticated version of him as a proto-martyr of the independence.

The specific history of each of these memories, how the public opinion has historically understood them, has informed how people in the present mobilise them, almost as much as people’s contemporary needs and the past events themselves. Being constantly present in public life has amounted to the strength of the memory of the War of the Pacific, but this feature was not necessary for the other cases to be powerfully mobilised by social actors. In the case of Katari and Potosí, more recent points of recollection were defining, as well as how this memory interacted with local everyday lives, as will be explored below.

A final comment on the history of these memories is that we can note a fascinating interplay between official and insurgent discourses, since these stories constantly cross the borders between state and society. Katari’s saga navigated from a social group that identified with the Aymara peasant and was later turned into a symbol of the state, after Evo Morales’ government incorporated him into the official rhetoric. Conversely, the War of the Pacific was a state-promoted memory but has been used by a variety of groups during the last century to attack the government’s lack of patriotism. Potosí again represents a curious case, in which the narrative has provided the nation with defining characteristics (such as the claim against the

plundering of natural resources), but regionalism has turned away from the original main adversary of the story, foreign powers or the Spanish crown, and has now created an adversary of the Bolivian state itself, deemed to be authoritarian and centralised. Thus, this interplay suggests a dynamic understanding of memories that have participated in the state rhetoric, since social actors have the ability to overcome a passive understanding of the past that was probably intended by the state actors when they promoted them.³³⁸

Places of memory

As argued in the case of the memory of Tupac Katari, elements of activists' daily lives also have an impact on how memories can be perceived as rooted and become important tools of struggle. The social space, where experiences of dislocation and human interactions take place, is an essential element of people's everyday experience and can, as argued by Connerton (2009) among others, provide a setting in which the continuity between past and present can be projected.

As contemporary peasants, Tupac Katari toured around the rural provinces in La Paz, gathered support and marched towards the city. He followed an itinerary that every Aymara peasant activist in Omasuyos is familiar with because many of them go to El Alto and La Paz to sell their products or to participate in political activities. Today's *potosinos* are already part of a generation that grew up used to identifying colonial streets and places, such as the former house of Rocha, the owner of a lost treasure. Intense religiosity is also related to the original indigenous neighbourhoods and parishes, which are still important *loci* of political expression through sacrifice, such as hunger strikes. As with the majority of Bolivians, *alteños* hold a strong image of the lost territory, be it through the map of the nation's original frontiers or through idyllic pictures of former Bolivian beaches. In this case, the territory is lived only in the imagination but this does not decrease the strength of its evocation.

This everyday projection of memory on space indicates that local and national spaces, which are related to social identities, are still an essential dimension of the acts of remembering. Thus, views on memory that propose its detachment from collective identities, such as

³³⁸ See, for instance, Fabricant's criticism of Morales' appropriation of Katari's legacy: "As the image of Katari appears on posters with the subscript, 'Katari led the rebellion, Evo the Revolution,' it elevates Morales as the protagonist of these kinds of popular movements, erasing the long history of anti-colonial and now neo-colonial collective action (...)" (2012, p. 23). The present study, however, suggests that this is not entirely the case. Collective memories depicted here were detached from their function of state legitimization and supported social struggles against the government. This certainly happened with the memories of Potosí and the Pacific, so it is reasonable to conclude that if even these were not fully "domesticated" by official rhetoric, Tupac Katari will hardly cease to be a symbol of rebellion.

Landsberg's "prosthetic memory" (2004), or even Rothberg's "multidirectional memory" (2009), are inappropriate for the cases studied here. Moreover, this research suggests that, if the "prosthetic" or the "multidirectional" memories are to take root in a particular human group, more than only being expressed through compelling media and cultural objects, they will probably need to find equivalents of their settings in local understandings of social space, which will also depend on national and local identity configurations.

Remembering dismemberment

A quite revealing category that cross-cuts all the memory cases is that they are impregnated with corporal metaphors, which contribute to strengthening popular attachment to them. Tupac Katari's limbs being sent to each of the rebellious provinces resonates with the old Incarrí myth, in which the body of the Inca grows underground until the redemptive moment of the *pachakuti*. As Perrier Bruslé noted, there are abundant metaphors related to human injuries applied to the lost seacoast, such as "amputated" territory and the "bleeding wounds" left by the war (2013). In Potosí, the mountain itself is related to a living entity, Pachamama with *polleras* (Absi, 2005, p. 91), who might collapse at any moment. While the minerals grow inside its womb, the mountain has to be fed with libations and offerings and sometimes it takes the miners' lives to satiate its hunger. The destiny of the whole city depends on this fragile balance between what is being taken and what is being given, which takes place inside this whole living body called Cerro Rico.

What is the relationship between the corporal metaphors and the activity of remembering itself? While studying the memory of the War in Vietnam and the AIDS epidemics in American culture, Marita Sturken noted that bodily tropes, particularly the "healing wound", served to represent the process of overcoming a traumatic event through remembering: "To remember is to fragment a body and its memory; to remember is to make a body complete" (Sturken, 1997, p. 72). While Sturken analysed the memories of the Vietnam War and the Aids epidemic, whose "wounded" victims were still living in American society, the Bolivian cases referred to bodies – a mythical hero, a national territory and a mountain - that were much more difficult to materialise in single living individuals. This situation turns the argument upside-down: individuals do not express memories through corporal metaphors to overcome traumatic experiences that have harmed them, but rather it is the metaphors themselves that create the effect of a trauma, increasing the narrative strength of the memories. This "trauma-like" feeling is not unclaimed nor difficult to be expressed in language; it is fostered by a narrative that

transforms a territory and a mountain, for example, into entities that are human-like and should be kept whole.

Susannah Radstone defended a similar viewpoint in her discussion of trauma: “it is not an event, which is by its nature ‘toxic’ to the mind, but what the mind later does to memory” (2007, p. 17). Even if this research does not deal with the individual experience of a trauma, her statement can be perfectly applied to collective memories of events which were not directly experienced by the social actors. Nietzsche famously once argued that something had to be burnt in to be remembered: “Only something which never ceases to cause pain remains in memory” (2009, p. 45). Here, we propose that something does not need to cause pain incessantly to be remembered, actually it does not even need to have caused pain originally: the most important feature is that it hurts and burns in the present, according to contemporary and historically specific ethical and political judgements.

The other memories

If the characteristics listed and discussed above – narratives of imbalance and dismemberment, memories’ historical and spatial dimensions – are able to explain the power of certain past events in the present, they cannot alone explain why other events and narratives have not been mobilised by social activists. For instance, the Chaco War and the 1952 revolution could have represented a history of imbalance between national political elites and popular sectors, they could have been projected into familiar spaces, such as the territory lost during the Chaco campaign or the streets of La Paz in which the revolution occurred. Why did certain memories gain privileged treatment in the actors’ narratives and others did not?

We are here in the realm of speculation since these less frequent memories were not a focus of this study. Some hypotheses were already mentioned in the methodological section and they could be understood as multiple factors that might have had an individual or a combined impact: different social sectors usually had very divergent interpretations of these events, so their memories lacked a consensual narrative among Bolivians; these memories were unable to provide a clearer depiction of a demand for the future, such as the recovery of a resource, industrialisation, development, remaining locked in the absurdities of the event itself; they were too “young”, since time allows lived experiences to become more simplified narratives, with clearer messages that could be easily mobilised by the actors.

It is worth noting that these memories were not absent from public life, they were just not as important as the ones studied here during some specific struggles. The struggles themselves, because they are political acts of conflict, which entail certain acts of protest –

marches, hunger strikes, blockades – and take place in relation to the state, also play a role in determining which memories are mobilised. For instance, as seen in the anthropological literature, the narrative on the time of the *chullpas* and their defeat by the sun, or Tatala, is pervasive in the Andean highland countryside. Abercrombie argues that this memory organises the understanding of time units, such as day and night or seasons, and spatial orientations in everyday life, such as the position of houses and the direction towards which one faces when performing libations (Abercrombie, 1998, pp. 326–346). Despite its popularity among rural communities, the story of the *chullpas* defeat by the sun was never mentioned by activists in Omasuyos, El Alto and Potosí. During the struggles, stories that could represent the Bolivian state and its political elites were more suitable platforms to express the demands for social change than stories of everyday life that functioned as organising principles for community reproduction. Social struggles that had the state as a main interlocutor also required a “common language”, a story that had the potential to spread over other sectors of Bolivian society, “nationalised” stories that could go beyond the social reality of the rural communities.

Constitutive and instrumental

There is a final feature that brings together all the characteristics cited to explain the power of memories: their ability to be both constitutive and instrumental. Their rooting in space and history and their ability to depict bodily metaphors amount for their constitutive character, but exactly this character allows the emergence of powerful narratives of imbalance and conflict, which turn memories into a tool that fosters mobilisation.

This feature presents interesting lenses to interpret the interplay between official and insurgent narratives, in which memories are detached from the frame of state legitimisation from which they sometimes originated. Because they are constitutive of the actors, the governments or political groups that first promoted them can be removed from the narrative, or can be criticised and have their public image reviewed, without changing the strength of the memory itself. The national elites who have been depicted as heroically resisting the Chilean invasion in the War of the Pacific were transformed later in the twentieth century into irresponsible silver magnates who did not care about the country’s territory or resources, as seen in the movie *Amargo Mar*. This did not change the emotional attachment to the lost territory but just added extra bitter flavour to it. After a whole century of being taught about the seacoast, Bolivians have established an almost intimate relationship with the story of this loss, as if it was related to the deepest understanding of themselves. When Felipe Delgado, the persistently drunken character of Jaime Sáenz, enters the sea of Antofagasta for the first time, he declares: “So much

heart for such little sea! There are not words to explain the universal sense of the fatherland. You see, we should worry only anecdotally with the fact that we lost the sea, given it's absolutely clear that one good day the familiar shape of the map will come back". He then decides to take a bottle of water to his local tavern to quench the thirst of his "good and sad friends", "men of the mountains" like himself (Saenz, 2007, pp. 300–301). The tragicomic tone of Delgado's visit to the sea only enhances the pervasive hopelessness with which the novel unfolds.

The emotional attachment does not necessarily imply that Bolivians have a "mandate" to recover the sea or to denounce Chilean imperialism. The lost seacoast could simply be a nostalgic element of Bolivian cultural identity or could even be transformed into a historical curiosity. It is the work of the current generation that actually determines what to do with these memories and this is, most of the time, quite an intentional activity. Florián Calcina, a member of FEJUVE in 2003, says that the enmity against Chile was an issue that "served to raise the consciousness of the masses, to instigate them" to join the mobilisation.³³⁹

The recalling of Tupac Katari and Bartolina Sisa further emphasises this double character of memory. At first, it appears as an "invented tradition", as Hobsbawm and Ranger formulated (1983), since the heroes had mainly been forgotten by the Andean rural population only one or two generations before. Nevertheless, the relationship they describe with them is very intimate: Zenobia Chura prays to Bartolina Sisa, cries and talks to her, asking for salvation and relief. Sisa relates to constitutive elements of Chura's identity: indigenous, peasant, woman and social activist, promoter of a resistance struggle against a powerful *q'ara* elite. The fact that she only had contact with Sisa's story in the union does not make it less constitutive of her identity. This is not a particular engagement of Chura with the hero; her whole generation, who grew up within the school of Katarism, developed their militancy in institutions that were called Tupac Katari and Bartolina Sisa not only as a homage but also as a sort of deeper commitment. When they commemorate the days they were executed, the fate and injustices suffered by them are continuously remembered as guidance for today's militancy.

We are now able to summarise the argument of these final remarks. These memories of the past served as platforms to express the demands of contemporary social struggles and were particularly powerful because they contained a combination of certain elements. They presented a simplified prototypical story of imbalance between fair and unfair characters (normally identified as the activists and the state), which could be easily projected into familiar spaces and presented corporal metaphors reproducing the effect of trauma. This narrative has often experienced a path-dependent continuous remembering through history (fed by official

³³⁹ Interview on 22 May 2013.

nationalism and oppositional movements) and would turn out to be both constitutive and instrumental for the activists claiming it.

Other researchers might find this work useful for its insights into both social movement theories and memory studies. The idea that memories can be platforms or prisms to express other contents, already presented by memory theorists (Huyssen, 2003, p. 98; Rothberg, 2009, p. 3), is enriched here by the identification of the elements that make this platform effective. Imbalance, bodily metaphors, spatial and historical dimensions - characteristics discussed above - have all played an important role in turning memories into powerful tools of social struggle.

Conversely, by understanding certain “stories” that appear during collective action as memories, rather than simply mobilisation frames, we avoid an “ahistorical perspective on culture” (Jansen, 2007, p. 958) that has been characteristic of many social movement studies. Scholars who seek to analyse the role of storytelling among social movements might benefit from the idea presented here that these stories can be successful in supporting struggles specifically because they relate to past contents perceived as rooted, which in turn is a consequence of the combined effects of the elements cited above.

Additionally, this research makes a contribution to an understudied aspect of memory studies: the politics of memory. Because this scholarly field has focused so much attention on the objects that communicated memory and the intentions of their authors and proponents, their reception, how people politically reacted to them and created social projects from them, remained a “wager” (Vermeulen et al., 2012, p. 231). Thus, this study presents an alternative research design to overcome this “wager” condition: an inverted methodology that starts with politics and then seeks to identify the memorial aspects of it.

Finally, and this theme will be explored in the next and last section, this study contributes to a perception of memory as a structured device containing a narrative order that performs a fundamental role during mobilisations: by providing a temporal dimension that projects the struggle into the past, it counteracts its confusion and assists in the projection of desired futures. This insight, already elaborated by some authors working on Bolivian society and history, presents another argument in favour of using memory in social movements’ studies: it not only helps to overcome an ahistorical perception of culture, but it also is able to explain the ability of certain social actors to put forward compelling and unifying projects during the chaotic moments of struggle.

Creative dreams, structured memories

The days of insurgency are marked by disorientation, when familiar spaces and relations are inverted: the streets are still there, but instead of the market, there are barricades. There is a strong sense of agency, which counteracts the victimisation that might appear when exposing the injustices suffered. Mobilisation allows new political projects to emerge and triggers decisive encounters, as when the young *alteño* Rubén Fernández saw the *wiphala* for the first time in October 2003. In this sense, we can also identify a liminal condition of the struggle, when social relations are reshuffled and the daily routine for survival is briefly put aside, so individuals' energies are devoted to a collective objective.

Dignity is a common denominator, almost a cry for survival among the widespread turmoil. "Never on its knees!" was the main slogan of the *vecinos* in El Alto, but was also used by activists in Potosí and Omasuyos.³⁴⁰ Proclaiming such a slogan did not guarantee success; in fact, it demonstrated an acute perception of the danger and closeness to defeat felt by the actors themselves. Being on one's knees is a strong physical metaphor that relates to a fractured vision of the national self, as expressed by the sculptures of Emiliano Luján in La Paz: both Eduardo Avaroa, the hero of Calama, in Sopocachi, and the unknown soldier of the Chaco War in the Obelisco square are fallen and helpless. After the massacres and the persecutions lived by the miners and the peasants during the dictatorships, these social actors know the meaning of defeat, and shout "never on our knees," so they too can rise again.

³⁴⁰ Celestino Condori: "In El Alto people said in 2003, 'El Alto standing, never on its knees!' Here we repeated this slogan, 'Potosí standing, never on its knees!'" (interview on 10 September 2013). One leader explains that, while marching from Omasuyos to La Paz, activists said: "Omasuyos province, we are always standing, never on our knees" (Anonymous 9, interview on 11 July 2013).



Figure 5 – Emiliano Luján’s statue of Eduardo Abaroa in La Paz (©Anne Toomey)



Figure 6 - Emiliano Luján’s statue of the Unknown Soldier in La Paz (©Mark Berman, South American Postcard)

There is a dream-like quality to the protest days. People were taken out of conventional life in a state of intense confusion; they were not able to predict the future or to understand their peers exactly. When leaders thought they would be beaten by the rank-and-file, they were acclaimed. When they decided to negotiate with the government, recognising its weak position, a new event shifted the balance of power. Circumstances changed radically every day, many structural features that organised people’s lives were diluted and actors had to improvise. *Vecinos* described surreal scenes: main avenues were blocked with abandoned train carriages,

pedestrian bridges were put down. Javier Ajno described the days in October as an “adventure”,³⁴¹ Marco Llanos said these were the “greatest moments of tension” he has ever lived, because of “the uncertainty, of not knowing what is happening”.³⁴² And this search for information, to make sense of the process, triggered spaces of encounter, such as the vigils around bonfires that spread all over El Alto during the October nights.

Dreams are opposite to memories. They represent, according to Halbwachs, a non-socialised state: “(...) the person who sleeps finds himself during a certain period of time in a state of isolation which resembles, at least partially, the state in which he would live if he were in contact with no society” (1992, p. 39). Memories instead are characterised by their structured and socialised character, since they emerge through socialisation processes. They counteract, thus, the dream-like quality of the days of insurgency. They provide the activists with some temporal order, an interpretation of what is being lived and should come next. The images of the past turn out to be much more than the wreckages seen by Benjamin’s angel of history.³⁴³ They are living entities that, instead of tying people to the past, help to frame the present and the future. Here lies the most important quality of memory as a platform: it constitutes a solid base in which their actions can be rooted and directed towards a horizon of change.

This creative role of memories was emphasised by some commentators of Bolivian society. If in the first chapter we identified some methodological problems with the assumptions they attached to memory, as something that is kept hidden or latent in the collective unconscious, their analyses of the effect of memory in the struggle are very compelling and express beautifully what is being argued in these final comments. For instance, Hylton and Thomson’s an “insurgent memory” as an important device to foster indigenous resistance:

Insurgent memory, in other words, is a temporary conscience that articulates past and present, feeding collective political identity and practice, strengthening them in ancestral insurgent actions, and thereby giving them the authority of a deeper social meaning at the time of uprisings against the illegitimate dominant order, with the objective of initiating new social relations. Insurgent memory can consider symbolic and human sources, practices and strategies as political inspiration. Given its cultural and moral power, it can strengthen its subjects’ spirit and reasoning, even given the significant risks associated with a confrontation with the dominant power (Hylton & Thomson, 2003, p. 9).

³⁴¹ Interview on 5 December 2012.

³⁴² Interview on 26 February 2013.

³⁴³ In his ninth thesis on the philosophy of history, Benjamin describes a Klee painting of a staring angel: “His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress” (Benjamin, 1968, pp. 257–258).

Silvia Rivera's concept of the *ch'ixi*, which "expresses the parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not extinguish but instead antagonize and complement each other" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012, p. 105), could also be employed to describe the protagonists of this study, *alteños*, *potosinos*, *polleras* and *ponchos rojos*. According to her, *ch'ixi* is the conceptual key to accessing an indigenous modernity and to placing indigenous actors not in the frozen past or in the Western lineal future of progress and acculturation, but in the present, building their own fate. They are products of their time and the interactions lived within the colonial, the republican and the nationalist periods. Against Rivera, I would argue that the strength of their memory is not related to how deeply they were marked in their unconscious - a distinction that only amounts to an essentialism that she criticises - but to how it relates to people's present. The *ch'ixi* appears when the turmoil of protest, its surreal moments and almost infinite horizon of possibilities, meets structured memories, when the will to resist and to change finds its own temporal narrative and is transformed – during conversations around bonfires, at assemblies, barricade vigils, hunger strike pickets and meeting points in road blockades - in an explanation of why they are there and how they will pursue their destiny.

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The interviewees are listed by region and in chronological order of the interviews. Some of them were not directly cited, but all the information provided was important to contextualise the particular struggle, movement and memory being studied.

EL ALTO

Cipriana Apaza, member of FEJUVE (2005-2006), president of the *junta vicinal* of Villa Franz Tamayo (2002-2003). Interview on 23 and 24 November 2012.

Isabel Álvarez, member of Nisthaus market association (2003), Zona 16 de Julio. Interview on 24 November 2012 and on 6 December 2012.

Javier Ajno, president of FEJUVE (2013), president of the *junta vicinal* of Zona Tarapacá (2004-2009; 2012-2014). Interview on 5 December 2012.

Marco Llanos, journalist of Radio Wayna Tambo (2003). Interview on 26 February 2013.

Felipa Catacora, vice-president of FEJUVE (2013), president of the *junta vecinal* of Zona Juana Azurduy (2010-2013). Interview on 25 March 2013.

Rogelio Mayta, lawyer of the families of the victims of state violence in October 2003. Interview on 25 March 2013.

Felipe Imaña, member of FOCAPACI NGO. Interview on 26 March 2013.

Felix Tancara, member of the Federación de Ex-Combatientes de la Guerra del Chaco (2013). Interview on 26 March 2013.

Roberto Nina, member of the Comité de Vigilancia Distrito 4 (2013) and president of the *junta vecinal* of Zona 6 de Marzo (2003-2013). Interview on 13 May 2013.

Luis Barrera, member of the mobilisation committee of Zona Brasil (2003), president of the *junta vecinal* of Zona Brasil (2006-2013). Interview on 20 May 2013.

Florian Calcina, member of FEJUVE (2003). Interview on 22 May 2013.

Luis Saucedo, student leader in Zona Senkata (2003). Interview on 22 May 2013.

Mauricio Cori, president of FEJUVE (2003). Interview on 22 May 2013.

Vicente Fernández, member of FEJUVE (2003). Interview on 23 May 2013.

Carlos Barrera, member of FEJUVE (2003), president of Zona 79 (2013). Interview on 24 May 2013.

Luis Flores, member of FEJUVE (2003), *subalcalde* of Distrito 4 (2004). Interview on 24 May 2013.

Rubén Fernández, student and journalist of Radio Wayna Tambo (2003). Interview on 7 June 2013.

Carlos Rojas, member of the mobilisation committee of Distrito 4 (2003). Interview on 13 June 2013.

Julio Quilali, member of FEJUVE (2003). Interview on 13 June 2013.

Walter Andic, vice-president of the *junta vecinal* of the Zona Pedro Domingo Murillo (2003). Interview on 29 June 2013.

OMASUYOS

Constancio Gutiérrez, mayor of Achacachi (2013). Interview on 20 June 2013.

Raúl Bautista, member of the Omasuyos peasant federation (2013). Interview on 20 June 2013.

Daniel Rojas, one of the first Katarista leaders elected in Omasuyos (1978). Interview on 23 June 2013.

Anonymous 1, former member of Omasuyos peasant federation (Bartolinas). Interview on 23 June 2013.

Saturnino Rojas, executive secretary of the Ajllata canton (2000). Interview on 26 June 2013.

Vicenta Mamani, participant in the hunger strike at Radio San Gabriel (2003), Ajllata canton. Interview on 27 June 2013.

Benedicto Quino, former member of CSUTCB, former executive secretary of Achacachi canton. Interview on 28 June 2013.

Eusebio Quito, member of CSUTCB (1996), of the departmental peasant federation (1985), and of the Omasuyos peasant federation (1982). Interview on 28 June 2013.

Anonymous 2, former member of CSUTCB. Interview on 28 June 2013.

Luciano Miraflores, executive secretary of Warisata canton (2013). Interview on 28 June 2013 and 4 July 2013.

Pedro Lucana, canton Warisata. Interview on 28 June 2013 and 6 July 2013.

Felix Choque, canton Warisata. Interview on 28 June and 20 July 2013.

Eloy Captcha, president of the municipal council of Achacachi (2013). Interview on 3 July 2013.

Anonymous 3, former member of the Omasuyos peasant federation. Interview on 3 July 2013.

Anonymous 4, former member of the Warisata canton peasant union. Interview on 4 July 2013.

Anonymous 5, former member of the Warisata canton peasant union (Bartolinas). Interview on 4 July 2013.

Anonymous 6, former member of the Warisata canton peasant union. Interview on 4 July 2013.

Anonymous 7, former member of the Warisata canton peasant union (Bartolinas). Interview on 9 July 2013.

Anonymous 8, former member of the Gran Kalaque canton peasant union (Bartolinas). Interview on 9 July 2013.

Apolinar Quito, executive secretary of Warisata canton (2003). Interview on 10 July 2013.

Anonymous 9, former member of the Warisata canton peasant union. Interview on 11 July 2013.

Zenobia Chura, former executive secretary Omasuyos peasant federation (Bartolinas), former member of the peasant departmental federation (Bartolinas), former member of the peasant national confederation (Bartolinas). Interview on 15 July 2013.

Felipa Huanca, executive secretary of the peasant departmental federation (Bartolinas) (2013). Interview on 17 July 2013.

Felipe Quispe, executive secretary of CSUTCB (2003). Interview on 18 September 2013.

POTOSÍ

René Navarro, COMCIPO (1999-2004) and secretary general of the departmental government (2013). Interview on 30 November 2012.

Celestino Condori, president of COMCIPO (2010). Interview on 30 November 2012 and 10 September 2013.

Jhonny Llally, president of COMCIPO (2013), mobilisation committee (2010). Interview on 9 September 2013.

Benigno Castillo, executive secretary of the press workers (FTP) (2010). Interview on 11 September 2013.

Jorge Solares, COD-Potosí (2010). Interview on 11 September 2013.

Gregorio Flores, executive secretary of the Federación de Luz, Fuerza, Telecomunicaciones y Aguas de Potosí (2010), mobilisation committee (2010). Interview on 12 September 2013.

Francisco Portillo, Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Mineros de Bolivia (FSTMB). Interview on 13 September 2013.

Vladimir Cruz, independent social researcher. Interview on 13 September 2013.

Adolfo Vara, executive secretary of FUL-Potosí (2010). Interview on 25 September 2013.

Anonymous 11, activist of neighbourhood movement. Interview on 25 September 2013.

Emilio Elias, teachers' union, civic strike committee (2010). Interview on 25 September 2013.

Rodolfo Velasco, teachers' union (2010). Interview on 27 September 2013.

Anonymous 13, activist of the street traders' movement. Interview on 6 November 2013.

Guillermo Condori, FEDECOMIN, civic strike committee (2010). Interview on 7 November 2013.

Omar Velasco, journalist of Radio Kollasuyo. Interview on 7 November 2013.

Juan Vargas, executive secretary of the departmental federation of *juntas vecinales* (2010). Interview on 13 November 2013.

COROMA

Aurelia Copa, Coroma, *ayllu* Rodeo Pallpa. Interview on 10 September 2013.

Anonymous 10, Coroma. Interview on 10 September 2013.

Ignacio Lopez, Coroma, border comission. Interview on 11 September 2013.

Anonymous 12, Coroma. Interview on 5 November 2013.

Mario Cruz, Coroma, *ayllu* Caloga. Interview on 7 November 2013.

Esteban Camata, *agente municipal* of Coroma (2010). Interview on 26 November 2013.

German Blas, Coroma, *ayllu* Rodeo Pallpa. Interview on 26 November 2013.

Alfonso Mamani, *kuraka* of Coroma (2010). Interview on 27 November 2013.

Anonymous 14, Coroma. Interview on 26 November 2013.

Efraín Alavia, Coroma, *ayllu* Huatacalla. Interview on 3 December 2013.

GLOSSARY

Acronyms

In Spanish, followed by English translation

BIC	Bloque Independiente Campesino, Independent Peasant Bloc
CAOP	Consejo de Ayllus Originarios de Potosí, Council of Native Ayllus of Potosí
COB	Central Obrera Boliviana, Bolivian Workers' Confederation
COD-Potosí	Central Obrera Departamental de Potosí, Departmental Workers' Confederation of Potosí
COMCIPO	Comité Cívico Potosinista, Potosí Civic Committee
COMIBOL	Corporación Minera de Bolivia, State Mining Corporation of Bolivia
CONAMAQ	Consejo de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyo, National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo
COR-El Alto	Central Obrera Regional de El Alto, Regional Workers' Confederation of El Alto
CSUTCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia, Bolivian Unified Confederation of Peasant Workers' Trade Unions
FEDECOMIN	Federación Departamental de Cooperativas Mineras, Departmental Federation of Mining Cooperatives
FEJUVE-El Alto	Federación de Juntas Vecinales de El Alto, Federation of Neighbourhood Councils of El Alto
FTP	Federación de Trabajadores de la Prensa, Federation of Press Workers
FUL-Potosí	Federación Universitaria Local de Potosí, Potosí Local Federation of Students
MAS	Movimiento al Socialismo, Movement Towards Socialism
MNR	Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, Nationalist Revolutionary Movement
OTB	Organizaciones Territoriales de Base, Grass-roots Territorial Organisations
THOA	Taller de Historia Oral Andina, Andean Oral History Workshop
UDP	Unidad Democrática y Popular, Popular Democratic Unity
UPEA	Universidad Pública de El Alto, Public University of El Alto
YPFB	Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales de Bolivia, State Oil and Gas Company of Bolivia

Non-English Terms:

<i>Alteño</i>	Resident of the city of El Alto.
<i>Ayllu</i>	Political and geographical unit that groups together communities and can be equivalent to an ethnic unit. It was part of indigenous political and social organization before the advent of <i>haciendas</i> and is used today in areas that were not occupied by <i>haciendas</i> (such as Northern Potosí) or in communities that seek to re-construct their pre-Columbian political organization at a local level.
<i>Coromeño</i>	Person from the indigenous district of Coroma, who identifies herself/himself with the Coroma nation.
<i>Corregidor</i>	Canton's main authority (contemporary Bolivia); provincial representative of the state (colonial period).
<i>Cholo/a/ita</i>	Ethnic term for rural-urban migrant, used sometimes with negative connotations. <i>Chola</i> is a term normally used for market women who wear

	traditional clothes (<i>pollera</i> , shawl and hat), and <i>cholita</i> is its diminutive form, often used for single and younger women.
<i>Chullpa</i>	Pre-colonial tombs. <i>Chullpas</i> are also the name given to wild mythical beings that were almost entirely extinguished with the arrival of the sun, and are related to the underworld.
<i>Hacienda</i>	Rural private estates established during colonial and republican rule.
<i>Juntas vecinales</i>	Neighbourhood councils.
<i>Kajcheo/kajcha</i>	Practice of exploiting mines during weekends that was considered illegal during colonial times. During the nineteenth century, the practice was institutionalised, and the <i>kajchas</i> became free-lance workers hired on commission by mine owners. Today, <i>kajcha</i> is a term used for cooperative miners.
<i>Katarista</i>	Peasant and urban movement, which emerged during the 1960s, that evoked the image and name of Tupac Katari.
<i>Mestizo/a</i>	Person of mixed European and indigenous origin. Compared to <i>cholo</i> , a term that refers to mixed ethnicity, <i>mestizo</i> is normally used to depict people that are culturally closer to “white,” while <i>cholo/a</i> tends to describe an urban indigenous person.
<i>Mingas</i>	Free workers in the Cerro Rico, during the colonial period.
<i>Mita/mitayos</i>	A system established by Viceroy Toledo at the end of the sixteenth century that used men from native communities as forced labour to work in the mines. The workers were called <i>mitayos</i> .
<i>Paceño</i>	Person from La Paz department or city.
<i>Pachakuti</i>	Moment of radical change, inversion of time and space.
<i>Pachamama</i>	Deity or force of nature that corresponds to Mother Earth and is the source of fertility.
<i>Patrón</i>	Literally means “boss”. Name of given by the Indian tenants (<i>yanaconas</i>) to the owner of their lands, before the 1953 Agrarian Reform.
<i>Pollera</i>	Characteristic voluminous skirts worn by indigenous women.
<i>Poncho</i>	Traditional garments of indigenous men in the Andean region, normally worn during public activities.
<i>Pongueaje</i>	Unpaid personal service provided by tenants to the <i>patrón</i> , his family or the <i>hacienda</i> administrator.
<i>Potosino</i>	Person from Potosí department or city.
<i>Pueblo</i>	Provincial town.
<i>Q’ara</i>	Literally naked and antisocial. The term is normally used to depict white or <i>mestizo</i> city people.
<i>Qullasuyo</i>	One of the four former jurisdictions of the Inca territory, which corresponds today to the highland and valley Bolivian territory.
<i>Rancherías</i>	Specific neighbourhoods assigned to <i>mitayos</i> and their families in Potosí.
<i>Vecinos</i>	Neighbours, residents of a town or a city.
<i>Vende-patria</i>	Traitor of to the fatherland.
<i>Wiphala</i>	Coloured chequered flag that represents the Qullasuyo.
<i>Yanacona</i>	Landless Indian living inside the <i>haciendas</i> who exchanged his services against access to small parcels of land to grow crops for family consumption.

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